

Continuing Professional Development of Teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana

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Research Article

Received date: 01/03/2016

Accepted date: 20/09/2016

Published date: 28/09/2016

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Keywords: Continuing professional development,
Teacher education, Adult learners

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the significance of teacher continuing professional development in junior secondary schools in Botswana. The junior secondary school situation is a fluid sphere that demands continuing professional development of teachers. Changes in school's physical and social environment, curriculum, and educational policy take place too often. Teachers need to adapt to such situations to be effective in such a dynamic environment. Continuing professional development of teachers is critical to deal with the gaps in training due to time and changes. The paper is an extract of a study that investigated the availability of structures or programs that facilitate continuing professional development of teachers and factors that impede teacher development in seven randomly selected Junior Secondary Schools in northern region of Botswana. The study was quantitative and qualitative in nature. Data was gathered using questionnaires and interviews. A computer aided statistical analysis (SPSS version 20) was used to analyze the quantitatively derived data. The analysis engaged both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Qualitative responses were coded, categorized and analyzed into major and minor themes. The results indicated lack of structures or programmes in junior secondary schools which facilitate teacher development. Furthermore, results revealed other impediments to professional growth of teachers in junior secondary schools.

INTRODUCTION

Continuing professional development (CPD) is one of the major factors of elements required in the advancement of the quality and professionalism of a teacher. Teachers do not enter the classroom as finished products hence, the need for their continuing professional development. In other words, pre-service training does not equip teachers with all the necessary skills and knowledge they need to be highly effective and efficient in their classrooms. It is through experience, practice, assistance and more training that novice teachers can learn and improve to become better teachers. Furthermore, there has been noteworthy investment of effort the world over in CPD to help advance teacher quality and also help them to meet the changing needs of students.

This paper explores the issues that relate to the concept of continuing professional development of teachers in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) in Northern Botswana. The paper specifically addresses two aspects of CPD of teachers: barriers of CPD of teachers and the availability of structures that facilitate CPD of teachers in junior secondary schools. A number of scholars have made attempts to define the concept of continuing professional development. Steyn and van Niekerk ^[1] relate professional development to lifelong developmental programmes that focuses on a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to educate students more effectively. On the other hand, Oduaran ^[2] understands continuing professional development to mean all lifelong learning career development programmes designed to help different professionals acquire relevant skills and knowledge for the development of their performance. From the above definitions, one can conclude that continuing professional development is an on-going process which leads to improved work satisfaction, accomplishment of professional goals, positive development of individual knowledge and competence and keeping up to date with developments within the area ^[1].

The significance of CPD of teachers cannot be overemphasized. The teaching and learning environment in junior secondary schools is fluid, hence, the need for the teachers to be continuously developing in their profession. The fluidity of the teaching and learning environment in schools could be due to society's local and as well as international educational goals such as universal

basic education by 2015, lifelong learning, life skills education, HIV/AIDS education, emotional intelligence, competency in the use of information communication and technology. In this regard, teachers face new responsibilities and challenges which need new skills, knowledge and new roles which can be obtained through CPD. The reason for such is that teachers join the teaching profession with different qualifications. In Botswana, teacher qualifications in junior secondary schools vary. They range from Diploma in Secondary Education to Master's Degrees. Robinson and Latchem ^[3] argue that teachers vary in number of years of education they received and levels of attained, the nature and amount of training completed, levels of motivation and support for teachers. These diversities call for the organization of custom-built CPD courses. The diversity also demands teachers to continuously update their knowledge and skills due to the introduction of new curriculum; changes in technology; changes in learning needs of the students and/or in the light of new research on teaching and learning. In this regard, after initial training, many teachers continue to have developmental needs relating to curriculum and instruction. Professional development is needed because initial teacher education cannot contain all the knowledge that is needed in the profession. Therefore, there is need for teachers to grow professionally so that they discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Continuing professional development of teachers has been observed to be a key aspect of all the components that are required to advance the quality of teachers. Teachers do not enter the classroom as a finished product, but they need to attain new concepts, ideas and knowledge to improve their professional skills and proficiency which in turn advances general quality of educational service delivery. It is through continuing professional development that teachers can acquire knowledge and skills necessary in their classrooms. The following factors influence CPD of teachers. These factors are: teacher commitment; school leadership; collaboration; schools culture; time and financial resources ^[3].

Time has been found to be a critical factor in CPD. Time should be availed for teachers to participate in teacher development programmes. Study argues that teachers need time for make continuing professional development an on-going part of their work on daily basis. The implications of availing more time for teacher continuing professional growth is that teachers become more effective and as a result, the more students learn. Therefore, time is a significant factor in professional growth of teachers.

Another significant factor of CPD of teachers is funding of the professional development programmes. These professional development activities come in different forms. It could take the form of upgrading teachers from lower to high qualification; running workshops and seminars for teachers. These activities have to be financed for them to happen. This calls for school to have a budget which caters for CPD of teachers ^[4].

School leadership is another important factor in CPD of teachers. Quality leadership presents an orderly and nurturing environment that supports teachers and stimulates their efforts and should be committed to design and develop CPD for teachers. Therefore school managers should be capacitated to support and promote CPD of teachers at school level. A positive school culture is another ingredient for successful CPD of teachers. The school should be humane and professionally supportive by providing teachers with resources when in need and support opportunities to work together and learn from each other. A school management with a motivating culture encourages teachers to engage in professional development programmes at school or elsewhere. A motivated teacher learns from others and is more likely to attend various professional development activities. Collaborating teachers utilize their strengths and complement each other's knowledge and skills ^[5-7].

The necessity of continuing professional development of teachers is widely accepted the world over. Botswana's Revised National Policy of Education (RNPE) of 1994 recognizes the importance of CPD of teachers. The policy advocates for: strengthening of probation systems in schools; school heads as instructional leaders to take responsibility for in-service training of teachers; in-service education officers to visit schools to supplement school based in-service training and accessibility of in-service training to all teachers at various levels to ensure continuing professional and academic development ^[8].

Education systems have adopted different approaches to continuing professional development of teachers. However, there are challenges with regard to implementation of CPD programmes in schools. Studies conducted by Boaduo and Kolnik ^[6] on CPD of teachers established the following as barriers to teacher professional development: insufficient funding, time constraints, lack of support by school leadership, lack of trained personnel to oversee CPD of teachers, lack of ownership by teachers, lack of structures that support CPD initiatives and the study on School-Based Staff Development in Botswana established that: lack of funding; tight schedule; individualism; lack of support from school management; lack of reward for participation and infrequent staff development activities hinder CPD of teachers in schools. These could be some of the factors that impede CPD.

In brief, what emerged from the literature review is that teachers need continuous upgrading and development since they do not enter the classrooms as finished products. Reviewed literature also revealed that they are factors which are significant in implementation of CPD programmes in school. Amongst all these factors, school leadership is very pivotal when it comes to issues of CPD of teachers in school. For example if the school leadership has very little regard for CPD of teachers then CPD activities will be allocated small percentage of the school budget. Quality leadership creates school environment that supports, motivates and encourage teachers to have a meaningful contribution to quality teaching and learning in school. Teacher participation in CPD activities is one of the contributors to quality teaching and learning in the classroom. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school

leadership to make sure their staff members are able to meet the demands of the policies and curricula as necessary through providing quality leadership ^[9,10].

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory underpinning this paper is andragogy. Knowles defines andragogy as the art and science of helping adults to learn. The theory highlights that adults should be taught differently than children because the learning processes are considerably diverse. The theory raises five critical assumptions that need to be considered in CPD of teachers. The assumptions are that, adult learners are: self-directed and autonomous; have accumulation of life experience; are goal oriented; are relevancy-oriented; and are problem centered in their learning. Although theory is old it is still applicable to today's modern practices of teaching and learning.

Firstly, adults commit to learning when the goals are realistic and important to them. In other words, adult learners want to see the connection between what they are learning and what they accomplish in their day to day activities. Teachers being adults will commit to CPD programmes that touch base with what they do in the classroom, and also if what they learn have prospects for immediate application in the classroom. There are challenges which teachers encounter in school. These include: students indiscipline, lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, and high teaching load. Therefore, CPD programmes which do not seem to help teachers to address these problems attract teachers' minimum interest. This critical assumption challenges education managers to come up with teacher development programmes which are realistic, that is programmes which offer solutions to practical challenges teachers encounter in classrooms ^[11].

Secondly, adults have a deep need to be self-directing or self-concept. Pohland and Bova ^[7] are of the view that adult learners dislike circumstances in which they feel that other people are imposing their will on them. Adults want to take more responsibility of their own learning and the direction it takes. This assumption of the adult learning theory challenges education managers to desist from imposing programmes which they think will aid teachers to grow professional without their input. The self-directing assumption clearly signals to education managers that teachers are adults they are in the know of what CPD programmes will best enhance their professional development. The role of education managers is to facilitate the process of CPD activities.

Thirdly, adult learners have an accumulation of life experience which is a resource for learning. When teachers are teaching, they accumulate knowledge through experience. The knowledge which they gather through experience provides a base which can be used in CPD programmes. Teachers want this knowledge utilized. Therefore, those charged with responsibility of facilitating CPD programmes should recognize teacher's experiential knowledge. Education managers should avail opportunities for teachers to share their experiences such as challenges they face and success when teaching their lessons ^[12].

Another critical assumption of andragogy theory is that adult learners are problem-centred in their orientation to the learning process, not subject-centred. Adult learners are more interested in knowing how what they are learning will impact or apply in their life. Similarly, teachers as adults want to know the applicability of the CPD activity in their classrooms. Adults learn in order to be able to better perform a task, solve a problem, or live in a more satisfying way. The assumptions challenges educational authorities to provide programmes intended for professional growth of teachers that are realistic to enhance their knowledge and skills. In essence, CPD programmes demand teachers to be effective and efficient in their delivery of service and therefore, it is important to design CPD programmes that can help them achieve the ever demanding school environments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study the researcher engaged a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the data collection and analysis processes. The mixed approaches were chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather different but harmonizing data to best understand the situation regarding factors that impede CPD in Junior Secondary Schools (JSS) and structures in schools that support professional growth of teachers. The study was conducted in JSS in Northern Botswana which has thirty-three (33) schools out of about two hundred (200) in the whole country. The study was delimited to this area because of the vastness of the country which could have been a challenge for the researcher to access research participants ^[13].

Two research instruments were used to gather data. A closed-ended questionnaire was used for the quantitative data collection from teachers. The use of questionnaire was appropriate because it allows for the collection of data from large coverage of the population in a shorter period of time. Interviews were used for the qualitative data collection from teachers, school heads, senior teachers and in-service education officers. The use of interviews was done in order to allow the respondents to reveal their experiences and opinions with regard to issues pertaining to continuing professional development of teachers.

The population of the study was mainly teachers, school heads, and senior teachers in thirty three junior secondary schools as well as in-service education officers in the northern Botswana. The choice for these research participants is based on the fact that they are competent on issues of CPD of teachers. Numerically the population is one thousand three hundred and seventy six research participants. One thousand three hundred teachers, thirty three school heads, thirty three senior teacher staff development and ten in-service education officers ^[14].

In quantitative phase, seven junior secondary schools in Francistown were conveniently sampled from the thirty three junior secondary schools in northern Botswana because schools in this region are dispersed. Two hundred and forty copies of questionnaires were hand delivered to all teachers in the seven JSS in Francistown and a contact person was established in the schools to assist in the collection of completed questionnaires. One hundred and twenty six completed and usable questionnaires were collected. Non response by some participants was attributed to misplaced or lost questionnaires. The researcher gave the respondents questionnaires again but still the participants failed to complete them. Data from the questionnaires was confidently used to draw conclusions for the research. As for the qualitative phase, a sample comprising teachers, school heads, senior teacher staff development, and in-service education officers were randomly selected and interviewed. Four JSS were randomly selected from seven JSS in Francistown by the “blind draw” or with the “closed eye” method. The four school heads, four senior teacher staff development and four teachers of the randomly selected schools comprised the sample for the interview. In addition to that two in-service education officers were randomly selected from a total of ten education officers in northern Botswana. In total, fourteen participants were selected for interviewed. Prior appointments with the interviewees were made and they were all interviewed. All interviews took place in schools except for in-service officers which was conducted in their offices. A voice recorder was used during the interview and was conducted in English ^[15].

Quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 20). The data was coded and captured into a spread sheet. The analysis engaged the descriptive statistics because it helped to show data in meaningful way such that it can be easily interpreted. As for the qualitative data, audiotapes were repeatedly listened too and transcribe and categories were worked out which were then coded according to the key research questions. The researcher used the themes already identified in the quantitative data analysis.

In conclusion, the researcher employed the mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative approaches because it allows the researcher to gather different but harmonizing data to best understand the situation with regard to programmes in schools that support CPD of teachers and barriers of CPD of teachers in JSS in northern Botswana ^[16].

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the results of the study. One of the research questions which guided the study was: Are there any continuing professional development programmes in your school? Thirteen questionnaire items were developed to address the research question.

These items were captured in a five point Likert scale ranging for Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The data was analyzed using Pearson’s chi-squared test (χ^2 -test) of goodness of fit, to establish if the observed responses were as anticipated, and to check if the observed frequencies were uniformly distributed across categories of responses. All the results were significant. The analysis for these items gave ($\chi^2 = 3.19$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.203$). The χ^2 -value was very small, indicating that the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies were not very different. There was no significant difference.

Overall, the analysis of quantitative data in relation to this research question revealed that there are no structures or programmes in Junior Secondary Schools which facilitate continuing professional development of teachers ^[17].

The outcomes of the analysis of qualitative data gathered in relation to the same research question revealed that the only available structure in school which facilitate CPD is staff development committee.

Below are some excerpts of responses of the research participants:

Well its only staff development committee and that is the only one. (Teacher 1)

Aah! We do have a staff development officer and somebody not trained. Once in a while there are in-service workshops sometimes in some schools there is induction of new teachers to familiarise them with what is going on in school. Basically that is all (Teacher 3).

We have staff development committee (School head 1). We bank on staff development committee who do intensive induction programmes and we do lesson observation (school head 2).

To tell the truth the only structure we have currently will be staff development committee only. It is the one which host workshops (Senior Teacher Staff Development 1).

The above quotations from teachers indicate that there are limited resources and staff development procedures in schools. Teachers are faced with many challenges in their classrooms, therefore limited CPD resources and procedures compound their challenges.

Another key research question which the study attempted to answer was what factors impede CPD of teachers in JSS in northern Botswana? The outcomes of the analysis of quantitative data established the following as barriers to CPD of teachers:

- Tight school schedule;
- Insufficient funding;

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- Lack of ownership by teachers;
- Lack of support by school leadership;
- Lack of appropriate reward for professional growth and
- Lack of input by teachers in CPD initiatives

Generally results indicate that there is lack of support from school leadership. To further substantiate the examples above, barrier to CPD of teachers established from both qualitative and quantitative data analysis is tight school schedule.

School programmes are so congested that teachers volunteer to teach in the afternoons, weekends and even during vacation. So if they were to develop themselves or even if they were to plan for staff development workshop, time is so limited and it is restricted for results and results from students (Teacher 3).

In the above excerpt, besides indicating tightness of teachers schedule it also reveals how teachers are overwhelmed with work. So it is the work load which leads to tight schedule for teachers hence a barrier to professional growth.

Furthermore, analysis of qualitative data established other factors that impede CPD. These are: inadequate skilled personal; unstructured in-service education; insufficient manpower. The analysis reveals that these barriers were raised by education officers' who are facilitators/managers of CPD programmes for teachers'.

We are thin on the ground. In my case I will be one officer looking after all science subjects; Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Maths but I am Biology officer. I am not well informed on issues that concern to Physics, Chemistry and Maths which means I have very little input in these subjects and this hinders professional development of teachers in these subjects (Education officer 2).

The above quotation also reveals that there are limited structures or programmes that facilitate CPD of teachers as well as factors that impede CPD of teachers in selected junior secondary schools in northern Botswana ^[18].

The results have revealed that indeed there are problems in junior secondary schools as regards the CPD. The barriers of CPD of teachers are not confined to school environment but they extend to education managers (education officers).

Education officer play a significant role in professional growth of teachers. Quality leadership in school is very essential with regard to CPD of teachers. Amongst all the barriers of CPD, lack of support by school leadership wears heavily on CPD of teacher because it can be source of other barriers. School leadership comes up with school budget and they can decide to fund CPD activities inadequately. Under staffing which leads to tight schedule could be due unwillingness of school leadership to employ more personnel because of other interests. This challenges education authorities to ensure that schools are led by men and women of substance otherwise quality teaching and learning will be challenge in schools ^[19,20].

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The outcomes of the study revealed that there are limited structures which facilitate teacher development in JSS in northern Botswana. The findings concur with Bulawa and Bredeson ^[10] who also established insufficient or lack of structures in schools which support professional development of teachers. The basis of teacher quality is the provision of adequate opportunities for personal and professional growth of teachers ^[21-24]. Feinman-Nemser ^[17] argued that teachers require access to serious and sustained learning opportunities at every stage in their career if they are to be able to teach in ways that meet demanding new standards for student learning or to participate in the solution of educational problems. These prospects include amongst others structures or programmes in schools which will facilitate professional growth of teachers. Looking at the theory of andragogy, teachers need to be self-directed where they can do things on their own with minimal supervision. Although the theory demands this, the situation in schools limits teachers to pull on their own, make their own efforts to develop and self-direct themselves. They cannot do it in a vacuum. Sustained learning opportunities should be provided by the Ministry of Education and Skills Development ^[13].

Programmes such as coaching, mentoring, peer observation and lesson study should be established in schools to facilitate teacher development. This is also demanded by the theory of andragogy that demands a goal and relevant oriented situations in schools. The theory challenges the senior personnel in schools and Ministry of education to be on their toes and deliver opportunities where teachers can apply themselves, go through training and have a dialogic situation in schools. Programmes such as peer observation provide a supportive, blame-free environment that encourages and facilitates professional growth of teachers. The senior personnel should task themselves with the responsibilities of mentoring and coaching by availing funds. Study argue that the process of observation and feedback facilitates discussion and exchange of practical and relevant ideas, which many teachers report as being crucial to the fruitfulness of the CPD experience ^[25-27]. The results of a study on lesson study model in United States of America showed that teachers exhibited increased subject matter knowledge, increased knowledge of instruction and increased capacity to observe students. These professional development programmes discussed above requires teachers to collaborate their departments to enhance professional growth of each other. Furthermore, these programmes require minimum or no funding at all. Therefore, there is no reason why schools should not have such programmes to promote CPD of teachers.

It emerged that time is a constraint with regard to CPD of teachers in junior schools in northern Botswana. While time is a

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constraint, it should be availed for teachers to engage in professional development programmes so that they improve the quality of teaching in their classrooms. Teachers need time to make CPD an on-going part of their work on a daily basis and their participation in professional development activities, make them teach more effectively. As a result students learn more. Nevertheless, teachers in countries such as Germany, Japan and China do have significant amount of time to engage in CPD activities. In these countries teachers teach fewer classes, consequently spend part of the day conferring with students and colleagues on other professional development activities. Botswana's education system should emulate approaches adopted by these countries by reducing the workload of teachers to create time for teacher development activities in schools. The concept of time can be blended in the issue of a goal oriented situation as demanded by andragogy theory. A schedule and plan need to be done such that programmes are done according to an organised plan that is systematic ^[28-30].

Inadequate funding of teacher development activities was identified by the study as one of the barriers to CPD of teachers in schools. Insufficient funding is a major challenge faced by teachers and educators worldwide. However, in some parts of the world, schools came up with initiatives to address this challenge. A high school in Colorado created a Professional Development fund through the initiative of a group of teachers. In the context of Botswana's education, Ministry of Education and Skills Development is the sole funder of CPD programmes of teachers but government is challenged financial as the outcomes of the study points out. Therefore other stakeholders such as private sector should be encouraged to fund CPD activities for teachers. While the andragogy theory demands that teachers need to apply their experiences, be goal oriented and solve problems, funds are critical to achieve these assumptions by the theory. For example problems and goals can be solved by teachers' interaction, collaboration and dialogue. The absence of these can only lead to frustration and a burn out.

Unsupportive school leadership emerged as one of the barriers of CPD of teachers in Junior Secondary Schools. One of the key roles of instructional leaders is to avail opportunities for teachers to grow professionally. Support by school management is very important for promoting teacher development and high quality education. In the context of education system of Botswana, the RNPE of 1994 recognizes the significance of the instructional leaders with regard to CPD of teachers. The policy states that School heads as instructional leaders are responsible for in-service training of teachers. However, outcomes of the study revealed lack of support by school leadership. School leadership needs to be capacitated for them to able to play their social and technical roles more effectively. Therefore, lack of support to CPD activities could be attributed to incapacitation ^[31,32]. The capacity of school management is the ability of the leadership to carry out its duties including supporting CPD of teachers at school level. The situation in schools contradicts the assumptions of the theory; the opposite is the realities in most junior secondary schools. School leadership is the starting point for teachers to enable teachers to deliver effectively. If the school leadership is weak, it also weakens the teachers' services.

Another barrier to CPD of teachers established by the study is lack of teacher ownership of professional development initiatives. Teachers are of the view that they have minimal or no input in the decisions about the 'what' and 'how' of the professional development activities they are to participate in. CPD is a learning process. One of critical assumption of adults learning theory is that adults have a deep need to be self-directing or self-concept. Pohland and Bova ^[7] argue that adult learners dislike circumstances in which they feel that other people are imposing their will on them. Teachers want to have an input on the decision of 'what' and 'how' of CPD activities. Therefore, CPD programmes which relegate teachers to be passive recipients of knowledge are an impediment in their professional growth. The mentorship of teachers is vital for them to own the programmes they are delivering. Therefore rigorous, robust training and in-service of teachers who have been in the service and those who have newly joint the teaching will provide a platform self-directed agents.

Lack of trained personnel to manage CPD programmes is another issue of concern. Education managers are essential in capacitating school management. Their responsibility is to interpret and supervise the implementation of education policy at their level of administration. Education managers guide, direct and advise school management on teacher professional development. In the context of Botswana's education system, there are two officers managing CPD of teachers. These two officers are: Senior Teacher Staff Development who is based in school and In-service Education officer who is at Regional Office. The In-service education officer link up with school management team and staff development teacher to identify the training needs of the schools or individuals. Senior teacher staff development's responsibility is to facilitate CPD of teachers in schools. For these officers to effectively and efficiently deliver on their mandate, they should be knowledgeable and skilled for the job.

Unstructured in-service programmes also surfaced as barrier of CPD of teachers. Currently there is no policy framework at national level in Botswana which directs CPD of teachers. Countries like Ethiopia and South Africa have such policy frameworks; Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994 and South African National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development of 2006. The policy framework highlights all aspects that relate to CPD of teachers such as: objectives of CPD; types of CPD; time for CPD; responsibilities of CPD stakeholders and resources and materials to support CPD. Botswana's education system need such a policy because it will help to address some of the barriers to CPD of teachers in schools. Issues like; who and how will CPD programmes be funded; types of CPD programmes; when do teachers engage in CPD programmes will be spelled out in the policy framework ^[33-36].

All in all, the realities of the junior secondary school run parallel with the assumptions of the andragogy theory. Teachers cannot be self-directed, goal oriented, relevancy oriented, problem solvers and apply their experiences in the classroom situations if

the coaching and mentorship is lacking from the school management and senior personnel in the Ministry of Education and Skills Development as regards continuing professional development ^[37].

CONCLUSION

It emerged from the outcomes of the study that there are barriers to CPD of teachers in Junior Secondary Schools in northern Botswana. These barriers include amongst others: time constraints; insufficient funding; untrained personnel to facilitate CPD of teachers. Therefore the Ministry of Education and Skills Development should make all necessary attempts to overcome these barriers of CPD of teachers in JSS. Arguably, the basis for teacher quality is the provision of adequate opportunities for personal and professional growth of teachers. These prospects include amongst others structures or programmes in schools which facilitate professional growth of teachers. Importantly, teachers require access to serious and sustained learning opportunities at every stage in their career for them to be able to teach in ways that meet new standards for learning. Programmes such as coaching, mentoring, peer observation and lesson study should be established in schools to facilitate teacher development.

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