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An Evaluation of the Contribution of Professional Development in Enhancing Teachers' Job Performance in Public Secondary Schools in Kyela district, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the contribution of teachers' professional development (TPD) to job performance in public secondary schools in Kyela District Council, Mbeya Region, Tanzania. Grounded in Knowles' Theory of Andragogy (1973) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1934), the study adopted a qualitative descriptive case study design involving 36 participants, including 30 teachers, five heads of schools and one District Education Officer. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and documentary reviews and analyzed thematically. Findings revealed that teachers' professional development significantly enhanced pedagogical knowledge, subject mastery and classroom management, while promoting student-centred and competence-based teaching approaches. Participation in workshops, mentoring and collaborative learning strengthened teachers' motivation, confidence and instructional competence. The study also found that TPD had a direct positive impact on students' learning outcomes by fostering greater engagement, comprehension and academic achievement. Professional development activities encouraged teachers to adopt innovative methods such as group learning, practical demonstrations and reflective teaching, leading to improved teaching quality. The study concludes that sustained, structured and context-specific professional development is vital for improving teacher effectiveness and educational quality. It recommends that education authorities institutionalize continuous professional learning programs, link them to student outcomes and provide incentives to enhance teacher motivation and retention.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, Job Performance, Competence-Based Learning.

1. Introduction

Professional development is a continuous process that helps teachers improve their knowledge, skills and abilities to perform better in their work. It includes different learning activities such as workshops, seminars, mentoring and self-study, which allow teachers to keep up with changes in education (Mouza & Lavigne, 2020). Professional development is important because it helps teachers use new teaching methods, manage classrooms effectively and understand how to meet the needs of their pupils. When teachers continue to learn and develop, they become more confident, motivated and effective in their work, which leads to better teaching and improved learning outcomes for pupils (Martin, Sunley & Turner, 2020).

Around the world, professional development plays an important role in improving teachers' job performance. In countries such as Canada and France, organised programmes for teacher development have helped improve the quality of teaching and learning. In Canada, teachers focus on teamwork and the use of technology in classrooms, while in France, teachers take part in regular training through the Personal Training Account (CPF), which helps them gain new skills (OECD, 2024; Pineau, Bernard & Roy, 2020). In many African countries, including South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya, professional development has helped teachers strengthen their subject knowledge, teaching skills and classroom management (Van der Westhuizen, Human & Maja, 2021; Adu & Sarpong, 2023; Ogutu & Wamukoya, 2020). However, some challenges, such as lack of resources and limited access to training, still affect how well these programmes work, especially in rural areas.

In Tanzania, the government introduced the National Framework for Teachers' Continuous Professional Development (TCPD), known as MEWAKA, in 2020 to support teachers' ongoing learning and improve their performance. The framework aims to strengthen teachers' understanding of subject content, teaching methods and professional ethics so that they can deliver quality education (MoEST, 2021). Studies in Mbeya Region by Mwaisela and Mwaisela (2024a, 2024b) showed that professional development, especially through mentoring, helped teachers improve their teaching skills, confidence and classroom practice. Overall, professional development makes a strong contribution to teachers' job performance by helping them become more skilled, motivated and effective in their work, which leads to better teaching and improved pupil achievement.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

This study is based on Knowles' Theory of Andragogy (1973) and Vygotsky's Social Development Theory (1934), which provide a strong foundation for understanding the role of teacher professional development in improving job performance. Knowles' theory highlights that teachers, as adult learners, benefit most when learning is self-directed, practical and focused on solving real classroom problems, allowing them to apply new skills and knowledge directly in their teaching. Vygotsky's theory emphasises the importance of social interaction, collaboration and mentorship, showing that teachers develop their skills through support from peers, mentors and professional communities. In relation to this study, these theories support the investigation of how professional development through training, workshops, mentoring and collaborative learning helps teachers to improve their teaching methods, manage classroom challenges and enhance their overall job performance. The study considers professional development a key factor in empowering teachers, improving teaching effectiveness and achieving better learning outcomes for pupils.

3. Empirical review

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that Teacher Professional Development (TPD) significantly enhances teachers' job performance and overall instructional quality. Mutisya (2023), through a descriptive correlational study in public secondary schools in Kenya, established that participation in professional development programmes positively influenced teachers' pedagogical skills, instructional methods and subject knowledge, resulting in improved job performance. The study concluded that continuous professional training strengthens teachers' capacity to deliver high-quality instruction and recommended that educational authorities prioritise structured, comprehensive development initiatives. Similarly, Nabaggala (2022) conducted a cross-sectional descriptive survey in Ibanda Municipality, Uganda, using a quantitative approach to examine the relationship between TPD and job performance. The findings indicated a significant positive correlation, with professional development enhancing subject mastery, teaching effectiveness and classroom management. The study recommended the systematic implementation of professional development programmes with allocated budgets to sustain improvements in teachers' competencies.

In the Tanzanian context, Mwanza (2021) applied a mixed-methods convergent parallel design to assess the impact of professional development practices on teachers' performance in public secondary schools in Nyamagana district. The results demonstrated that in-service training, workshops and seminars significantly enhanced teaching strategies, reduced stress and burnout and improved overall teacher effectiveness. The study emphasized the need for continuous investment by the government and educational stakeholders to maintain teacher motivation and professional growth. Supporting these findings, Mohamed and Arulprasam (2024) highlighted that structured and ongoing professional development programmes positively influence teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes, which in turn improve student academic performance. Collectively, these empirical studies by Mutisya (2023), Nabaggala (2022), Mwanza (2021) and Mohamed and Arulprasam (2024) affirm that TPD is a critical factor in fostering teacher development, enhancing instructional quality and promoting educational outcomes. They consistently advocate for sustained, evidence-based investment in contextually relevant professional development initiatives to empower teachers and elevate the quality of education.

4. Materials and Methods

This research employed a qualitative descriptive case study design to examine the contribution of professional development on teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Kyela District Council, Mbeya Region, Tanzania. A total of 36 participants were involved, including 30 teachers, five heads of schools and one District Education Officer. Five schools were selected through simple random sampling from a total of 40 schools, while heads of schools and the District Education Officer were purposively selected due to their managerial and supervisory roles. Six teachers from each school were chosen using school lists, ensuring equal participation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the District Education Officer, heads of schools and three teachers from each school. In addition, focus group discussions were conducted with a total of thirty teachers drawn from various schools to gather diverse perspectives and shared experiences. Secondary data were obtained from school training rosters, professional development policies, council training registers and research reports to triangulate findings. Interviews and discussions were audio-recorded and supplemented with notes for accuracy and qualitative data were analysed thematically and through content analysis, involving coding and organisation into themes cross-verified with documents. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality and voluntary participation, were strictly observed.

5. Findings

5.1 *The Contribution of Teachers' Professional Development*

5.1.1 *Improving Teachers' knowledge and Skills*

The study findings established that the contribution of teachers' professional development is meaningful and multifaceted, impacting teachers' growth. This was vivid as during interview with one secondary school teacher, his responses were as follows:

Teachers' professional development contributes a lot in teaching and learning process. Firstly, it improves teachers' knowledge and skills such as pedagogical skills and classroom management and it deepens teachers' content knowledge. Secondly, encourages the use of student-centred, competence based learning and active learning strategies. (Interview: Head of school C, 27th August, 2025).

The findings revealed that teachers' professional development had a meaningful and multifaceted impact on teaching and learning. The interview with Head of School C indicated that professional development enhanced teachers' knowledge and skills, including pedagogical abilities, classroom management and subject content mastery. It was also reported that such development encouraged the use of student-centred and competence-based approaches, fostering active learning strategies. The teacher emphasized that professional growth directly improved classroom practice and instructional quality.

During the focus group discussion, another head of a secondary school shared his responses on improving teachers' knowledge and skills as follows:

Teachers' professional development contributes in increasing teachers' confidence and motivation in teaching and learning process due to provided rewards when their students has good performance. (Interview: Head teacher from school D, 27th August, 2025).

The focus group discussion revealed that teachers' professional development enhanced teachers' confidence and motivation in their teaching practice. Head teacher from school D explained that professional growth was linked to recognition and rewards, particularly when students performed well. This approach reinforced positive teaching behaviours and encouraged teachers to engage more actively in the learning process. The interview highlighted that professional development not only improved skills but also boosted teachers' morale and commitment.

It was also reported that such development encouraged the use of student-centered and competence-based approaches, fostering active learning strategies. The teacher emphasized that professional growth directly improved classroom practice and instructional quality. During the interview session, Teacher A shared her views on improving teachers' knowledge and skills as follows:

Professional development has helped me understand new teaching methods and improved my ability to plan and deliver lessons effectively. It has increased my confidence in the classroom and enabled me to engage pupils more actively in learning." (Interview: Teacher A, 24th August, 2025).

Teacher A indicated that professional development improved her teaching skills, enhanced lesson planning and increased classroom confidence, leading to more active pupil engagement.

Teachers explained that periodic in service workshops focusing in areas like science, mathematics, biology and pedagogy significantly supported their professional growth. The workshops emphasized the adoption of modern, student centred teaching methods and improved subject content knowledge and competence based learning. Teachers noted that,

During mathematics workshop, we were introduced on practical strategies for engaging learners through real life examples. It was different from traditional way of just writing formulas on the board. We were also encouraged to share class room experiences and these gave me confidence to try learner centred approaches in my lessons (Focused Group Discussion: Teachers from school A, 27th August, 2025).

Teachers reported that periodic in-service workshops in subjects like science, mathematics and biology significantly enhanced their professional growth. The workshops promoted modern, student-centred teaching methods, improved subject knowledge and reinforced competence-based learning. They also noted that practical strategies and experience-sharing during the sessions boosted their confidence to apply learner-centred approaches in the classroom.

Professional development initiatives were found to enhance teaching methods and promote more effective classroom practices. The teacher highlighted that continuous learning and training directly contributed to improved instructional quality and pupil engagement. During the interview, the District Education Officer shared his views on improving teachers' knowledge and skills as follows:

Professional development programs organized at school, ward and district levels have strengthened teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills. They have also enhanced teachers' confidence and collaboration, which ultimately improves teaching quality and pupil learning outcomes." (Interview: District Education Officer, 23rd August, 2025).

Other teachers added that teachers benefit greatly when they are given opportunities to update their knowledge and teaching methods.

The biology workshop helped us to simplify complex concepts by using experiments individual aids. I realized that when learners see or do something practically, they understand better than when they only listen. These workshops make me more effective teacher because I now focus on what student can do, not only what I can say which based on competence learning. (Focused Group Discussion: Teachers from school B, 25th August, 2025)

Other teachers reported that opportunities to update knowledge and teaching methods significantly benefited their professional development. They explained that workshops, such as in biology, enabled them to simplify complex concepts through practical experiments and aids, enhancing student understanding. These sessions also shifted their focus toward student-centred, competence-based learning, making them more effective teachers.

The study findings established that teachers' professional development contributed significantly to enhancing instructional practices and adapting to curriculum reforms. This was evident during the focus group discussion with Secondary Teachers from school C, who explained as follows:

Through Sharing experiences with my colleagues I gained strategies for handling large chasses, managing diverse learners and integrating technology where possible. This exchange also enabled me to transition from content based learning to competence based learning which make it easier to adopt to curriculum reforms that focus on connecting learning to real life situations. (Focused Group Discussion: Teachers from school C, 25th August 2025).

The findings show that teachers' professional development significantly enhances teaching quality by improving knowledge, pedagogical skills and classroom management. Workshops in subjects like mathematics, science and biology introduced practical, learner-centered strategies, shifting teachers from traditional methods to competence-based approaches. This not only increases instructional effectiveness but also boosts teachers' confidence and

motivation, especially when student performance improves. Collaborative sessions that encourage sharing classroom experiences further foster professional growth and peer learning. The implications suggest that schools and policymakers should invest in regular, targeted professional development, incorporate teacher feedback and recognize achievements to sustain motivation, ultimately promoting a competent, student-focused teaching workforce.

5.1.2 Improving Students Learning Outcomes

The study further assessed how professional development contributed to enhancing students learning outcomes in public secondary schools. Findings revealed that when teachers engaged in professional development activities they were better equipped with new instructional strategies, improved assessment techniques and innovative approaches to classroom management. This was reflected by head of school and teachers during interview and focused group discussion as illustrated below;

In teachers' professional development students' learning outcomes is improved when is well designed and sustained, it leads to higher students' achievement and greater student engagement and motivation during teaching and learning process. (Interview: head of school E, 25th August, 2025).

The interview with Head of School E indicated that well-designed and sustained professional development had positively influenced students' learning outcomes. It was reported that teachers who regularly participated in these programs gained new skills and strategies that directly enhanced classroom instruction. As a result, students demonstrated higher achievement, increased engagement and greater motivation during lessons. This suggested that continuous professional growth for teachers played a key role in improving both teaching quality and student performance.

When I applied new strategies learned during workshop or peer sessions for instance group activities or practical work student be more engaged and active in class. This helps student instead of struggling with knowing concepts they now participating in mastering tasks confidently which directly improve learning outcome. (Interview: Teacher J, 27th August, 2025).

Teacher J reported that when they applied new strategies learned during workshops or peer sessions, such as group activities and practical work, students became more engaged and active in class. This approach helped students move from merely struggling with concepts to confidently participating in mastering tasks, which in turn directly improved learning outcomes. The teacher emphasized that practical, interactive methods enhanced both student understanding and classroom performance.

Students develops better collaboration skills and sense of responsibility for their own learning. This help to create more interactive, inclusive and supportive learning environment for them which favour their learning. The student instead of depending on teachers mostly they depend on their own. (Focus Group Discussion: Teachers from school K, 27th August, 2025).

The focus group discussion revealed that professional development contributed to fostering students' collaborative and self-directed learning skills. Teachers from school K noted that as students became more responsible for their own learning, the classroom environment shifted toward greater interactivity and inclusivity, supporting diverse learning needs. This transformation suggested that teacher professional development not only enhanced instructional practices but also empowered students to take active control of their learning, reducing over-reliance on the teacher.

Through the focus group discussion, teachers explained that professional development had a direct impact on improving students' learning outcomes as follows,

Through professional development I learnt new techniques for explaining difficult concepts and topics using practical examples. My students understand better now and these has helped them improve learning process due to the application of new instructional strategies. (Focused group Discussion: Teachers from school C 27th August, 2025).

During the focus group discussion, Teacher C explained that professional development directly improved students' learning outcomes. They reported that learning new techniques for explaining difficult concepts through practical examples enabled students to understand lessons more effectively. As a result, the application of these instructional strategies enhanced the overall learning process and contributed to better student performance.

The District education officer also emphasized the link between teacher development and students' outcome as follows,

I monitor teachers' participation in professional development by receiving TCPD weekly or monthly reports from ward education officers and observe their classrooms afterward through daily school monitoring. Schools were teachers actively engage in training often show noticeable improvements in students' engagement and assessment results. (Interview: District education officer, 25th July, 2025).

The above observation indicate that teachers' professional development positively impact students' learning outcomes by equipping teachers with innovative instructional strategies, improved assessment techniques and effective classroom management skills. Participants emphasized that well-designed and sustained professional development enhances student engagement, motivation and academic achievement. Teachers reported that practical, learner-centred techniques helped students understand complex concepts more effectively, while monitoring by education officers revealed observable improvements in classroom performance. These results imply that investing in continuous, targeted professional development is crucial for translating teacher growth into measurable student success. Schools should prioritize structured training programs to ensure enhanced teaching quality and improved learning outcomes.

Additionally, the documentary review revealed more about the contribution of teachers' professional development. Documents examined included records of in-service workshops, training reports and teacher performance evaluations. These materials provided insights into the subjects covered during professional development, such as pedagogy, classroom management and competence-based learning strategies. Additionally, reports from the Teachers' Continuous Professional Development (TCPD) system and school monitoring records highlighted participation patterns, teacher performance improvements and subsequent student learning outcomes. Documentary review thus offered concrete evidence on how structured professional development activities influence teacher growth, confidence and instructional effectiveness.

6. Discussion

The study findings revealed that teachers' professional development (TPD) significantly enhanced pedagogical knowledge, classroom skills, professional confidence, and motivation, leading to improved student outcomes. Teachers reported that participation in TPD programs deepened their understanding of effective teaching strategies and broadened their instructional repertoire. Through these activities, they improved lesson planning, classroom management, and the use of student-centred approaches that made learning more interactive and meaningful. Teachers also demonstrated greater ability to connect theory with practice by applying strategies acquired from workshops and peer sessions to real classroom contexts, particularly in mathematics and science lessons. As a result, students became more engaged and showed better comprehension of complex concepts. Consistent with the findings of Gore et al. (2017) and Ventista (2023), the study affirmed that well-structured TPD not only sharpens teachers' instructional practices but also increases their confidence and motivation to innovate in the classroom. This continuous growth fostered teachers' ability to adapt lessons to diverse learner needs and to create supportive, inclusive learning environments that encourage active participation.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that TPD fostered a collaborative culture and strengthened professional relationships among teachers within schools. Regular engagement in training and reflective practice enhanced teachers' self-efficacy and their willingness to share knowledge with colleagues through mentoring and joint lesson planning. Such collaboration contributed to the overall improvement of instructional quality across departments and promoted a collective commitment to school improvement. The study also revealed that teachers who actively participated in professional learning were more likely to use learner-centred strategies such as cooperative group work, project-based learning, and inquiry-driven activities that promoted critical thinking and student responsibility for learning. These findings support the arguments of Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) and Desimone and Pak (2017), who emphasize that effective TPD empowers teachers to become reflective practitioners capable of improving student achievement through evidence-based teaching. Overall, the study highlights that TPD serves as a catalyst for teacher effectiveness and educational excellence, reinforcing the importance of continuous professional growth as a foundation for sustainable school improvement.

The study further established that effective implementation of TPD programs required strong institutional support, adequate resources, and clear alignment with teachers' professional needs and curriculum goals. Schools that prioritized continuous professional learning through supportive leadership, monitoring, and access to teaching materials recorded higher teacher engagement and instructional innovation. Conversely, limited administrative support and resource constraints hindered the transfer of newly acquired skills into classroom practice. Teachers expressed that follow-up coaching, feedback mechanisms, and recognition of professional growth were essential in sustaining motivation and ensuring lasting impact. These insights echo the assertions of Opfer and Pedder (2011) and Avalos (2016), who argue that the sustainability of professional development outcomes depends on a conducive school culture that values collaboration, reflection, and accountability. Thus, the study underscores that institutional commitment and a structured support framework are vital for translating TPD initiatives into measurable improvements in teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

7. Conclusion

The study concluded that teachers' professional development (TPD) was essential for improving teacher effectiveness, professional confidence and student outcomes. It enhanced pedagogical knowledge, classroom management and the implementation of student-centred and competence-based strategies, while fostering motivation, self-efficacy and active participation in school initiatives. TPD also promoted student engagement, active learning and measurable improvements in academic achievement, highlighting its critical role in supporting curriculum reforms and sustaining continuous professional growth.

8. Recommendation

Based on the study findings, it is recommended that schools and educational authorities provide sustained, structured and context-specific professional development programs that combine practical classroom strategies, reflective practice and collaborative learning. Professional development initiatives should be explicitly linked to student outcomes to ensure that instructional improvements translate into measurable learning gains. Furthermore, teachers' efforts should be recognized and rewarded to enhance motivation and commitment and professional development programs should be regularly monitored and evaluated to maintain their effectiveness and alignment with educational goals.

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