Secondary School Teachers' Perception of "Teacher Professional Development": A Case Study of Teachers from Five Districts of Uganda.

Ortaokul Öğretmenlerinin Öğretmenlik Meslek Gelişimi Algıları: Uganda'nın Beş Bölgesindeki Öğretmenlerle Bir Durum Çalışması

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Abstract
Teacher professional development (TPD) is important in keeping teachers abreast with changes that characterise the 21st century schools. However, TPD will only be valuable if teachers perceive it as important. Moreover the varying perceptions of teacher professional development by teachers are likely to affect their view of TPD. Using data collected from secondary school teachers, this study explored teachers' understanding of the concept "teacher professional development, TPD approaches used by teachers and barriers/constraints they face. Results show that teachers have narrow understanding of the concept, and that to many TPD meant subject content upgrading by going back to teacher training college, while others view it as attending workshops and seminars. Barriers mentioned included shortage of time, lack of funds, lack of motivation and support by head teachers and government as a whole. Researchers recommend that teacher education should incorporate a component of professional teacher development in the initial teacher training. The head teachers and Ministry of Education and Sports should support in-service teachers in their endeavour to develop professionally. Teachers with low self-esteem should be motivated through attendance of conferences, workshops and group activities at local level.

Keywords: Secondary School Teachers, Teacher Professional development, teachers' perception.

Öz
Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi (ÖMG), 21. yüzyılda okulları şekillendiren değişiklikler ile birlikte öğretmenleri geliştirmek açısından önemlidir. Ancak ÖMG, öğretmenler onu önemli olarak algıla ise değer kazanır. Bununla birlikte öğretmenlerin, öğretmenliğin mesleki gelişimine dair algılarının çeşitliliği, onların ÖMG'ye olan görüşlerini de muhtemelen etkiler. Bu araştırmada ortaokul öğretmenlerinden elde edilen verilerden yola çıkılarak, öğretmenlerin "öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi" kavramına ilişkin algıları, kullandıkları ÖMG yaklaşımları ve karşılaştıkları engel/kısıtlamalar incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, öğretmenlerin ÖMG kavramına ilişkin kavrayışları dar bir açıya sahiptir. Birçoğu için ÖMG kendini geliştirmek için tekrar eğitim fakültelerine dönmek iken, bazıları için ÖMG seminerlere ve atölye çalışmalarına katılmak anlamına gelmektedir. Zamanın, maddi kaynakların, motivasyonun, müdürlerden ve hükümetten gelen desteğin yetersizliği gibi eksiklikler, karşılaşılan engeller olarak belirtilmiştir. Araştırmacılara göre mevcut öğretmenlik programlarında öğretmenlik meslek gelişimine ilişkin bir unsur barındırmalıdır. Eğitim ve Spor Bakanlığı ve müdürler, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim çabalarında onları desteklemelidir. Öz saygıları düşük öğretmenler kongrelere, atölye çalışmalarına ve yerel düzeyde grup etkinliklerine katılmaları için teşvik edilmelidir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Ortaokul öğretmenleri, öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi, öğretmenlerin algıları

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Introduction

The demand for quality education in schools, changes in curriculum, assessment, current trends in society, like climatic change, gender, introduction of new languages in schools, politics, education, insecurity, means teachers have to continuously receive professional development programmes. These reforms require that teachers improve the subject matter knowledge, pedagogical skills including understanding cultural and psychological factors that affect student learning (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). This is why Darling-Hammond (2000) argues that the most important variable in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. Similarly, Rhoton and Stile, (2002) assert that teacher expertise can account for about 40 percent of the variance in students' learning in reading and mathematics achievement which is more than any other single factor, including student background. Given the importance of the teacher, it is important to update their content and pedagogical practices in order for them to implement the changes. However, many teachers in Uganda seem not to appreciate and understand the importance of teacher professional development. This study explored teachers' perception of the concept of teacher professional development, the pathways to professional development and the constraints they face.

Definition of Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development has been defined in different ways. Villegas-Reimers (2003) defines it as development of a person in his or her professional role. The University of Delaware (2004) describes teacher professional development as; *ability of ordinary teachers to recognize and accept the responsibility for improving not only their own practice, but the shared practice of the profession. For this new path to be travelled, however, teachers will need to open their classroom doors and, rather than evaluating each other, begin studying their practices as a professional responsibility common to all."*(pp1). Reading First Program (2005) defines professional development as the process of improving staff skills and competences needed to produce outstanding educational results for students. Professional development is the key to meeting today's educational demands. At individual level it is the development of a person's professional role by gaining increased experience in one's teaching role which she/he systematically gains. It is also a gain of experience in professional growth through examination of his/her ability. Johnson (2009a) simply defines teacher professional development as "Lifelong learning", and argues that the two are much the same thing. Timperley's (2008) definition of teacher professional development is associated with student outcomes in particular teaching situations; *"the knowledge and skills developed are those that have been established as effective to achieve valued student outcomes".*

What is common in all the definitions is the renewal aspect that demands continuous learning. It is only in this way that practicing teachers will become a key to the

transformation of schools (Koki, 1997). In order for teachers to lead the reform efforts, they need to be offered expanded and enriched professional development experiences. Avalos (2011), however, cautions that teacher professional learning is a complex process, which requires cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers individually and collectively, the capacity and willingness to examine where each one stands in terms of convictions and beliefs and the perusal and enactment of appropriate alternatives for improvement or change. Teacher professional development can therefore be viewed as a "professional renewal" which energizes and strengthens the teacher's commitment to the teaching career.

According to Abdal-Haqq, (1996) effective teacher professional development must be ongoing and incorporating a constructivist approach, be school based and be embedded in the teachers' work. This entails treating teachers as active learners (McLaughlin and Zarrow, 2001) who are engaged in the concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation and reflection (Villegas-Reimers (2003). Teacher professional development is therefore a collaborative process providing opportunities for teachers to interact with peers, achieve individual development and group inquiry into practice and coaching or other follow-up procedures (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). The most effective form of professional development is that which is based in schools and is related to the daily activities of teachers and learners (Darling-Hammond, 2006; 1998). This ties in well with Quattlebaum's (2011) nine standards, including content knowledge and quality teaching, research basis, collaboration, diverse learning needs, student learning environment, family involvement, evaluation, data driven design, and teacher learning that all professional development should follow. Timperley (2008) argues that context-specific approaches promote teaching practices that are consistent with the principle of effective teaching but also systematically assist teachers to translate those principles into locally adapted applications. However, most professional teacher development tends to concentrate on activities rather than on the conditions under which they occur (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The purpose of this study was to discover the teacher's perception of the concept of teacher professional development, the pathways to professional development and the constraints they face.

Values of teacher professional development to practicing teachers

Literature shows that teacher learning is as important as children learning and that teachers need a comprehensive professional programme for all stages of their experience (Darling-Hammond, 1998, Villegas-Reimers, 2003). They go on to propose that governments should provide on-going support for teachers needing to develop student learning. The weak teacher education inherited from the conservative traditions, and little professional capacity for learning and change, combine to inhibit teachers in adopting new changes hence reforming their approaches to teaching and learning (Gabriel 2011). Similarly in Uganda the education system is poorly equipped to produce

deeper and more complex learning in students as well as in teachers. Teacher professional development is therefore essential to develop teacher's competences in order to teach effectively.

For old teachers in the profession, TPD enables them to meet colleagues and learn in groups with advantages of getting stimulation and support necessary for change. Learning in groups can change practices such as, in examining student work, curriculum, handling of students, gendered dimensions of school and classroom interactions that can negatively affect girls' and boys' learning experience and outcome. TPD also helps to gather information on differentiated professional experiences, feedback from participants' experience and trends in schools. This information is critical to teacher preparation programmes. Collaborative activities will assist the teachers' goal to remain up-to-date, useful and competitive. Collaboration with other teachers is key to mechanisms for providing teachers with ongoing training opportunities, team teaching, mentoring and development of networks.

Ongoing training has the potential to address knowledge gaps and upgrade and reinforce acquired skills (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Teachers learn new concepts, learn new skills, develop new attitudes, research, discuss and reflect on new ideas, try new approaches and integrate them into their practice (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Teachers are able to understand and recognise their own attitudes, perceptions and expectations, and how these affect their interactions with students to teacher approaches and thinking could be a motivator for change. Teacher learning is greatly increased when coaching, study teams and other peer support are provided. It brings significant changes that will meet the demands of educational reform, an effective systematic process that promotes ongoing professional growth for every teacher. Research also demonstrates that positive changes occur in teachers' practices when they experience sustained, high quality professional development (Rhoton & Stile, 2002). Using this definition and framework, this study explored teacher perception of teacher professional development.

Context of the area of study

Makerere University was the first government university to offer teacher education until recently in the 1990s when the other five government universities were established. In addition, over ten private universities have been established throughout the country and a teacher education faculty is always one of the core programmes offered. Further, from the 1970s ten National Teachers' Colleges were established in addition to the original Teachers' College at Kyambogo (now Kyambogo University). Uganda also has 45 Primary Teachers' Colleges scattered throughout the country. The National Teachers' Colleges train teachers graduating with a diploma in Education while those graduating from Primary Teachers' Colleges are awarded a certificate.

Uganda has three categories of teachers; grade three teachers (with a certificate

in education) who teach in primary schools; grade five teachers (with a Diploma in education, they teach lower secondary classes); and graduate teachers (with a degree in Education, they teach upper secondary school).

The teaching profession is one where the human resources easily progressively move up to the next academic level through going back to college. Uganda has experienced a large scale upgrading of teachers from grade three to grade five, from grade five to graduate teacher and a few have gone back to get a Masters in Education. In the last 10-20 years, the number of teachers, head teachers, tutors in teachers' colleges, inspectors of schools, and principals of national teachers colleges, is increasing. Registering for a Ph.D in Education is another aspect of professional development in the Ugandan situation. Introduction of Distance Education programmes in both government and private universities has facilitated this progress in professional movement from one academic level to another. However, the government of Uganda does not offer teachers paid study leave except for a few, nor does it promote them with increased pay after gaining another qualification. While the government of Uganda has attempted to provide some professional development for untrained teachers in primary schools through the Teacher Development and Management System (TDMS), no such trainings are in place for trained teachers in primary schools and those in secondary schools. The TDMS was designed to rapidly train and certify teachers to meet the soaring primary school enrollments (MacNeil, 2004). With this kind of situation teachers are disgruntled, and lack motivation to reflect on their teaching practices for the purposes of developing their professional career.

Statement of the problem

Teacher professional development appears not to be a priority and an agenda in the Ministry of Education and Sports programme. In Uganda when the need arises, a few days' training is organised. As a result teachers are left to plan for their own TPD. Society expects the teacher to carry out the role of developing the human beings in terms of the physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual wellbeing of the children they are entrusted with apart from teaching. This implies developing in the teacher proper attitudes, values and outlook apart from training one as a craftsperson. However, current teachers in Ugandan schools do not seem to conceptualize the concept of professional development in its diverse nature and few have had access or motivation/inspiration to attend professional development activities apart from upgrading from one academic level to another.

Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to find out the practicing teacher's perception of the concept of teacher professional development, how this can be achieved, and the constraints they face

Specific objectives of the study
1.   Find out how teachers define the concept of professional development
2.   What the practicing teachers perceive to be the main pathways to teacher professional development.
3.   Discuss the main constraints to professional development.

Methodology
This study surveyed the perceptions of the practicing teachers on the concept of teacher professional development. It was a qualitative study using open ended questionnaire and focus group discussions. In depth interview and focus group discussions were deemed appropriate ways of gathering data because of the opportunities for face to face communication. There were opportunities for the researchers and respondents to agree upon the pattern of interaction, immediate feedback, and corrections. The focus group discussion allowed us to verify information given by the respondents and to have a sense of possible differences in views in terms of schools and social economic backgrounds.

Questionnaires were used in order to identify the characteristics and a set of attitudes and beliefs. All teachers irrespective of their age and level of training responded to the open questionnaire administered to them by the researchers. The focus groups were used to obtain different views, feelings and opinions of the various teachers invited for the discussion. Teachers shared some commonalities although they have diverse backgrounds, gender, age and culture. It allowed researchers to listen, paraphrase questions and observe non-verbal responses. The respondents had the chance to share their experiences, and commented and elaborated on the topic under discussion. This study was carried out in five districts of Uganda.

Sample
A total of 100 secondary school teachers participated in the study, 70 male and 30 female. Responses are not segregated in terms of male or female, rural or urban schools, nor per subject whether science or humanities. The respondents were from five rural schools in Eastern Uganda and eight urban schools in Kampala. Data was analysed according to the themes developed according to the objectives that guided the study.

Findings

Perception of the concept of "Teacher Professional Development"
The research results are contextually situated in Ugandan schools, some rural, single sex, urban, and some are well established with resources and good infrastructure while others are "third world schools" with no good infrastructure or resources. The re-

sults in Table 1 reflect the nature of teachers responding to the questions posed to them. Each teacher gave more than one answer to questions in the questionnaire therefore the researchers could not calculate percentages.

Table 1. Responses to teacher definition of the concept of teacher professional development

Items	Frequency
To acquire knowledge and skills	50
Observing ethical code of conduct	20
Improve on pedagogical code of conduct	16
Improve on qualifications	08
Improvement: Socially, economically, cognitively, emotionally	06
Efficiency and effectiveness in teaching and learning	03
Growth in experience	02

Table 1 show that fifty teachers perceived teacher professional development as a process of acquiring knowledge and skills while twenty (20) believed it means observing the teacher code of conduct. This is followed by those who believed it means improvement on pedagogical skills and (8) eight who view it as improving on one's qualification. These findings are in line with those of Abdal-Haqq (1996), the Reading First Programme (2005), and Gabriel (2011) in their definition of the concept of teacher professional development. Ongoing learning and growth in experience is also emphasised by Gabriel (2011). Villegas-Reimers (2003) also view professional development as including formal experiences (such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc.) and informal experiences (such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc.). From this study teachers in Uganda view TPD mainly as acquisition of knowledge and skills. It is thus not surprising that many teachers clamor for Universities or colleges for the purpose of upgrading to another level of certification. In some cases the teachers may acquire teaching skills as they acquire the subject matter.

Pathways to Teacher Professional Development

Johnson (2009b) argues that there are a number of pathways to teacher professional development; including attending conferences, small scale workshops, online communities, talking informally, individual reading, reading groups, programmed action research, individual action research, giving sessions (small in-school meetings), writing (ranging from small articles to books), doing a formal course and membership of professional bodies. Other ways suggested include; doing things for the first time, peer observation, class action research, reflective and exploratory practice, participating in a project with fellow professionals etc. Timperley (2008) suggests that promotion of professional learning requires different approaches depending on whether or

not new ideas are consistent with the assumptions that currently underpin practice. In this section of objective 2, the teacher's perception of the main pathways to professional development is presented in Table 2. The teachers gave more than one response, therefore percentages were not calculated.

Table 2. Teacher response to pathways to professional development

Items	Frequency
Attend seminars/workshops (e.g. "SESEMAT")	74
Upgrading educational levels	56
Exchange programme with local and international teachers networking	38
Through research	37
Mentoring and coaching	24
Reading and writing	23
Preparing lesson plans and schemes of work as well as using appropriate teaching methods	22
Embrace teachers' code of conduct	19
Take on other responsibilities at school which will give exposure to new trends– get multi skilled	14
Start side income	12
Inspection and staff appraisal	12
Team teaching	10
Promotion at work	11
Participate in community work	06
Projects at individual or group level (academic)	04
Learn computer and use of ICT in teaching	04
Join Professional Associations	03
Follow the syllabus while teaching	02

The largest number of teachers (74) believed teacher development takes place when attending seminars and workshops. The next group of teachers 56 believd it is through upgrading one's qualifications, which normally takes 2 – 3 years in a University or a teacher training college. Although few teachers do research apart from that which they experience in teacher training colleges, 37 teachers believed research will help them to improve on their career. Based on past experiences, teachers bring to their teaching and learning attitudes, values, theories and images in the guise of beliefs that affect their own decisions about learning (Opfer & Pedder (2011). Teachers' responses above are explained by what they experienced and believe as well as valued as teacher professional development.

Mentoring and coaching was regarded as useful in promoting the professional development of teachers (24 responses). Koki (1997) argues that mentoring is a complex and multi-dimensional process of guiding, teaching, influencing and supporting a new teacher. A mentor teacher , guides and advises another teacher, in a situation characterised by mutual trust and belief. In this process the teacher mentor is also learning from the mentee in their interaction. On the other hand coaching is the assistance that

one teacher provides to another in the development of teaching skills, strategies, or techniques generally during conferencing, lesson observation and post-conference.

Although Ugandans have a poor reading culture especially in rural societies due to lack of reading materials, reading was ranked high. Newspapers in urban areas are available but expensive for most teachers especially for some schools which do not have libraries. So public libraries are confined to large urban centres. Writing is a rare aspect of a secondary school teacher but was also regarded as important.

Embracing teachers' professional ethics was another item ranked high simply because there are many cases of defilement of school girls and pregnancies caused by teachers. Alcoholism and bad dressing is also another aspect regarded as wrongdoing by teachers.

Networking among teachers both locally in Uganda and internationally in other countries was ranked high. Local networking at regional level normally has one goal; to improve performance in the national examinations which are very competitive. Timperley (2008) suggests; "engagement of expertise external to the group of teachers is necessary because substantive new learning requires teachers to understand new content, learn new skills and think about their existing practice in new ways"(pp20) Opfer and Pedder add that *"teacher collaboration enhances their learning ----to hold, we must understand collaboration as a collection of specific patterns across individuals and schools that hold in a variety of situations"* (pp386) School-based learning of this nature in Ugandan schools is rare save for the few well-established rich schools.

Preparing lesson plans and schemes of work and using appropriate teaching methods were regarded as important by teachers, However, nobody, not even school administrators, monitor secondary school teachers whether they have schemes of work or lesson plans. Most of them have teaching notes on topics they regard as valuable, in the external examinations for promotional purposes. This explains the statements from respondents , "government should inspect and do appraisal of teachers" The teachers felt they are not supported as some lamented; *"we need support by supervising us by subject specialists from teacher training colleges, Uganda National Examinations Board, National Curriculum Development Centre and the Ministry of Education and Sports"*

Giving tests regularly, giving feedback for improvement, loving students and solving their problems are aspects mentioned by a few teachers. For example; *"Having a close relationship with students; get to know students and solve their problems"*. Although it is mentioned by a few teachers (30) Timperley (2008) also emphasised it as "professional learning focusing on valued student outcomes is important".

The teaching methods used by almost all teachers are, talk and chalk, dictating notes or writing on the chalkboard. This is a clear indication of lack of teaching/learning resources. Other teachers suggested "multi-skilling" by getting involved in community work and taking other responsibilities in school activities of extra-curricular

activities. Timperley (2008) refers to this as multiple opportunities to learn and apply information, where deep understanding of ideas and concepts takes place, therefore activities that promote acquisition of knowledge and skills are essential in teacher professional development.

Teachers do not attend seminars and workshops, and some have failed to upgrade because they lack money. Those with money fear to lose their jobs if they go to study. This is why during interviews many of the teachers proposed that *"governments should grant study leave". "Government should increase the teacher's salary", "start side income"* in order for teachers to undertake TPD.

Constraints to professional development

According to the University of Delaware (2004), constraints to *effective professional development* include; "a different view of teaching as a professional activity. Secondly, teachers may hesitate to commit time to professional development that extends beyond the regular school day and year. They often prefer one-day workshops during the school year to extended commitments during the summer thirdly; professional development that focuses on subject matter content and classroom practices can meet with resistance. Even in supportive environments, some individuals may be uncomfortable sharing their understandings and beliefs with colleagues and supervisors; fourth, it is challenging and time-consuming to design and implement professional development that incorporates multiple characteristics of high quality. As instructional leaders and institutional change agents, school administrators and policy makers must address school-level obstacles to teachers' efforts to improve their practices. Among these obstacles is the rigid structure of teachers' work days, which allows too little time for individual and collaborative work toward instructional improvement" (pp4).

In a situation where education for the majority of the population is still a privilege rather than a right in Uganda, the teacher's basic needs, rights and teacher policies are not well implemented although they are well stipulated in the Uganda constitution of 2005 and the government white paper on education of 1992. The teacher responses in Table 3 are situated in the Ugandan context.

Table 3. Constraints and challenges preventing teachers' professional development

Items	Frequency
Low income/salary therefore no financial support	72
Society's lack of respect for the profession/ lack of self-esteem for teachers	29
Lack of drive to improve on their professional practices	20
Heavy domestic work and school timetables	18
Lack of support from school administration	16
Restrictive government policy – no study leave	16
Lack of exposure to knowledge about teacher professional development	16
Understaffing in school/ big classes leading to too much work	16
Burden of dependants, i.e. heavy financial responsibilities	14
No perceived benefits after professional development effort i.e. no promotion, no salary increment, etc	12
No access to internet, well stocked library, teaching resources	11
School administrators hate competitors and removed from payroll	09
Women in reproductive age husbands restrict their movements	06
No finalised structures for professional development	05

Most of the teacher professional development activities depend on availability of money whether seminars, workshops or attending a course for purposes of upgrading to another academic level. This explains why seventy-two teachers emphasised that low income/salaries do not support teachers in their endeavours to get involved in professional development. The University of Delaware (2004) emphasized the fact of high costs for the districts in USA. In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports is constrained by lack of funds to provide adequate teaching resources, a living wage for teachers and adequate infrastructure. Low salaries and the need to earn extra money detracts teachers from concentrating on their work; *'seeking for money diverts them to unprofessional activities like business, gambling etc"* Others (20) lack the drive or inspiration to improve on their professional knowledge and skills. This is due to a number of factors mentioned like large classes, implying heavy work, thus demoralizing teachers.

Heavy domestic work especially for female teachers while the teaching timetable is also heavy was also indentified as a constraint. In addition, teachers mentioned husbands who prevent their wives to go for professional development activities. One response; *"husbands restrict wives to go for further studies, for fear that other men will befriend them".* Large families and extended family dependants, put pressure on teachers' finances. Some teachers lack self esteem and there is no perceived benefit like promotion or salary increase. One participant said; *"Lack of focus/drive for further studies, many will ask, is there promotion? increased pay? Are there any benefits at all?"* Some have claimed that they lack exposure about possibilities of professional development. Lack of support by government and school administrators is another factor cited by teachers. Head teachers hate competitors, therefore any teacher who aspires to upgrade to another academic level like a masters degree in education is some-

times removed from the government pay roll on flimsy grounds. This leads to further under-staffing which is a big issue in some schools especially in rural schools. Lastly the government does not give paid study leave, hence there is no other way to go for further studies. Another factor mentioned is lack of access to internet, a library with up to date books, or teaching resources, and yet teacher training colleges may be too far.

Lack of time because of big/heavy timetables, domestic work and involvement in activities to get extra income is a very important factor mentioned by teachers of Uganda; Abdal-Haqq, (1996) argues that *"Teachers need time to understand new concepts, learn new skills, develop new attitudes, research, discuss, reflect, assess, try new approaches and integrate them into their practice, and time to plan their own professional development"* (pp2) As observed above practising teachers are mature, married, with children and extended families to support; with low salaries teachers need time to take care of their personal needs as well as their professional needs.

Conclusions

The above presentation and discussions indicate that teachers have a narrow view and understanding of teacher professional development. Generally, however, one can argue that what they have defined is a result of what they have been exposed to. New trends and issues in education are not easily integrated in the Ugandan education system due to lack of funds to enable education leaders to expose teachers to them. Lack of moral and financial support by head teachers and government is one aspect emphasised in this study. The teachers in most cases use personal savings and the majority are unable to save from their meagre income. Moreover there is a lack of institutionalised teacher professional development which would otherwise be cheap for teachers. Hence teachers who attempt to undertake TPD sometimes are denied leave.

Recommendations

This study underscores the need for government to institutionalise TPD to ensure all teachers have equal access to teacher professional development activities. A Teacher Education course for all teacher educators in Uganda teachers' colleges should established in the School of Education of Makerere University, to enable them to experience tutor professional development. In addition, government and teachers' colleges should help practising teachers appreciate the values of participating in teacher professional activities.

Acknowledgement

Özet

Giriş

Öğretim programlarındaki reformlar, öğretmenlerin alan bilgilerini ve öğrencilerin öğrenmesini etkileyen psikolojik ve kültürel faktörlere ilişkin pedagojik yeterliklerini geliştirmesini gerektirmektedir (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). Bu yüzden Darling-Hammond (2000) öğrenci başarısında en önemli değişkenin sınıftaki öğretmenin kalitesi olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Bu aynı zamanda, yeni öğretim programı, yeni değerlendirme biçimleri, sosyal yardım programları ve hatta öğretmen topluluklarında daha çok işbirliği adına daha fazla sorumluluk demektir. Bu araştırma öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi kavramına ilişkin algılarını, mesleki gelişime giden yolları ve öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları sınırlılıkları incelemektedir.

Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi farklı şekillerde tanımlanmıştır. Villegas-Reimers (2003) öğretmenlik meslek gelişimini bir kişinin mesleki rolündeki gelişimi olarak tanımlarken, University of Delaware (2004) öğretmenlik meslek gelişimini şu şekilde tanımlamaktadır: *"Öğretmenlerin yalnızca kendi uygulamalarını geliştirmek için değil aynı zamanda, mesleğin ortak uygulamalarındaki gelişimine ilişkin sorumluluklarını fark etme ve kabul etme becerisidir. Ancak bu yeni yolda ilerlemek için öğretmenler birbirlerini değerlendirmektense, sınıfların kapılarını dışarıya açmalı ve uygulamalarını mesleki sorumluluk olarak görmeye başlamalıdır."* (s.1). Bu aynı zamanda, öğrenciler için önemli eğitimsel sonuçları üretmek için gereken kişisel becerilerini ve yeterliğini geliştirme sürecidir (Reading First Program, 2005). Mesleki gelişim bugünün eğitimsel gereksinimlerini karşılamak için anahtar roldedir. Bireysel düzeyde mesleki gelişim, bir bireyin sistemli bir şekilde öğretme rolünden edinmiş olduğu deneyimin gelişimidir (Gabriel, 2011). Aynı zamanda kişinin kendi yeteneklerini incelemesinden doğan, mesleki gelişmeye dayanan tecrübe kazanımıdır. Bu nedenle öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi bir öğretmenin kariyerine olan bağlılığını güçlendiren ve ona enerji veren "mesleki yenilenme" olarak görülebilir. Ancak Avalos (2011) öğretmenlerin mesleki öğrenmesinin hem bireysel hem kolektif düzeyde bilişsel ve duyuşsal bağlılığı gerektiren karmaşık bir süreç olduğuna dikkat çeker. Tüm tanımların ortak yanı, sürekli öğrenmeyi gerektiren yenilenme boyutudur. Okulların dönüşümünde öğretmenlerin uygulamalarının anahtar rol oynayabilmeleri ancak bu şekilde gerçekleşebilir (Koki, 1997). Bu özelliği ile öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi öğretmenlerin meslektaşlarıyla etkileşime geçmeleri, bireysel gelişimlerini başarmaları, grup uygulamalarını sağlamaları için imkân sağlayan, işbirliğine dayalı bir süreçtir (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi öğretmenleri öğretme, değerlendirme, gözlem ve yansıtma yapabilen (Villegas-Reimers, 2003) aktif öğrenenler haline getirir (McLaughlin and Zarrow, 2001).

En etkili meslek gelişimi biçimi öğretmenlerin ve öğrenenlerin günlük etkinliklerine ve okullara dayanan biçimidir (Darling-Hammond, 2006; 1998). Bu tanım,

Quattlebaum'ın (2011) belirttiği içerik bilgisi ve kaliteli öğretim, araştırma temeli, işbirliği, farklı öğrenme ihtiyaçları, öğrenci öğrenme çevresi, ailenin ilgisi, değerlendirme, veri tasarımı, öğretmen öğrenmesi gibi mesleki gelişimde incelenmesi gereken dokuz standart ile örtüşmektedir. Uganda'da eğitim sistemi, öğretmenler kadar öğrencilerin de daha derin ve karmaşık öğrenmelerini sağlayacak biçimde değildir. Bu nedenle öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi, öğretmenlerin daha etkili öğretebilmeleri için yeterliklerini geliştirmeleri adına gereklidir.

Mevcut öğretmen yetiştirme çalışmaları bilgi eksikliklerini tespit etme ve kazanılan becerilerin geliştirilmesini sağlama potansiyeline sahiptir (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Öğretmenler yeni kavramlar ve yeni beceriler öğrenir, yeni yaklaşımlar geliştirir, araştırır, tartışır ve yeni düşünceleri yansıtır, yeni yaklaşımları dener ve bunları uygulamaya aktarırlar (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Öğretmenler kendi tutumlarını, algılarını ve beklentilerini anlayabilir ve fark edebilirler. Bunların öğrencilerle olan etkileşimlerinde ve öğretmenlik yaklaşımlarına ilişkin düşünme biçimlerindeki değişimlerinde nasıl etkili birer güdüleyici olduğunu bilirler. Öğretmen öğrenmesi koçluk, takım çalışmaları ve diğer meslektaş destekleri sağlandığında oldukça artmaktadır (Johnson, 2009a). Bu her öğretmenin mesleki gelişimini destekleyen etkili bir sistem olan eğitimsel reformun ihtiyaçlarını karşılamada önemli değişimler sağlar. Ayrıca araştırmalar, öğretmenler yüksek düzeyde mesleki gelişimi önemsediklerinde bu durumun uygulamalarda olumlu değişimler gösterdiğini ortaya koymaktadır (Rhoton & Stile, 2002). Bu nedenle bu araştırma, bu tanımlamaları ve alanyazını kullanarak, öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi algılarını incelemektedir.

Uganda'da üç tür öğretmen bulunmaktadır. Bunlar; ilkokullarda çalışan üçüncü derece öğretmenler (eğitim alanında bir sertifikaya sahip), ortaokullarda çalışan beşinci derece öğretmenler (eğitim alanında diplomaya sahip) ve liselerde çalışan uzman öğretmenlerdir (eğitim alanında bir dereceye sahip). Uganda hükümeti ilkokullarda çalışan, yetiştirilmemiş öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişimi için Öğretmen Gelişimi ve Yönetim Sistemi (ÖGYS) aracılığıyla bir girişimde bulunmuş olsa da ilkokullarda ve ortaokullarda çalışan yetiştirilmiş öğretmenler için böyle bir uygulama yoktur. ÖGYS artan ilkokul kayıtlarını karşılayabilmek adına öğretmenleri hızla yetiştirme ve onlara sertifika vermek üzere tasarlanmıştır (MacNeil, 2004). Bu uygulama öğretmenlerin bu durumdan şikayetçi olmalarına ve mesleki kariyerlerini geliştirmedeki amaçlarına yönelik motivasyon eksikliğine neden olmuştur.

Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi Eğitim ve Spor Bakanlığı için bir öncelik veya bir gündem maddesi olarak görülmemektedir. Uganda'da bir ihtiyaç doğduğunda yapılan yetiştirmelerde yetiştirme süresi çok azdır. Bunun sonucu olarak da öğretmenler kendi mesleki gelişimleri için planlama yapmak zorunda kalmaktadırlar. Toplum, öğretmenden öğretimin yanı sıra bir insanı fiziksel, entelektüel, sosyal, ahlaki ve ruhsal anlamda geliştirmesini beklemektedir. Bu durum öğretmeni bir zanaatkâr olmaktan öte, uygun tutum, değer ve görünüş bakımından geliştirmeyi gerektirmektedir. Ancak Uganda'da

okullarda görev yapmakta olan öğretmenler mesleki gelişim kavramının kapsamlı doğasını anlamış gibi görünmemektedirler. Çok azı sadece akademik anlamda gelişmek yerine farklı alanlarda mesleki gelişim etkinliklerine katılmaya ilişkin motivasyon ve erişime sahiptir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi kavramına ilişkin algılarını, bunun nasıl başarılabileceğini ve karşılaştıkları sınırlılıkları ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırmada özellikle öğretmenlerin mesleki gelişim kavramını nasıl tanımladıkları, öğretmenlik meslek gelişimine giden temel yollar ve mesleki gelişimde sınırlılıklar incelenmiştir.

Yöntem

Bu araştırmaya öğretmenlik mesleki gelişimi kavramı algılarını ortaya çıkarmak için 100 (70 erkek ve30 kadın) öğretmen katılmıştır. Katılımcılar Doğu Uganda'da yer alan beş kırsal okul ve Kampala'da yer alan sekiz kent okulundan seçilmiştir. Araştırma, verilerin toplanmasında açık uçlu sorular içeren anketler, odak grup görüşmeleri ve derinlemesine görüşmelerin kullanıldığı nitel bir araştırmadır. Görüşmeler yüz-yüze iletişim fırsatı sağlarken, odak grup görüşmeleri katılımcılar tarafından verilen cevapların doğrulanmasını ve okulların sosyo-ekonomik temelleri açısından doğabilecek farklılıklarının görülmesini sağlamıştır. Veriler araştırmayı yönlendiren amaçlar doğrultusunda geliştirilen temalar ile incelenmiştir.

Bulgular

a.) "Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi" kavramının algılanması

Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, elli öğretmen öğretmenlik meslek gelişimini bilgi ve beceri kazanma süreci olarak algılarken, yirmi öğretmen öğretmenliğin yürütülmesini gözlemleme olarak algılamaktadır. Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimini, pedagojik becerilerin gelişmesi olarak algılayan öğretmenlerin yanı sıra, sekiz öğretmen bireyin niteliklerini geliştirme olarak görmektedir. Bu araştırmaya göre, Uganda'daki öğretmenler ÖMG'yi çoğunlukla bilgi ve beceri kazanımı olarak görmektedir. Bu yüzden bir sertifika alarak düzey atlama amacıyla üniversitelere gitmek isteyen öğretmenlerin olması şaşırtıcı değildir.

b.) Öğretmenlik Meslek Gelişimine Giden Yollar

Araştırmaya katılan öğretmenlerin büyük bir kısmı (74) öğretmen gelişiminin seminerlere ve atölye çalışmalarına katılarak gerçekleştiğine inanmaktadır. Diğer bir grup öğretmen (56) üniversitede veya öğretmen yetiştiren fakültelerde iki veya üç yıl eğitim görmenin nitelikleri arttırdığını düşünmektedir. Öğretmen yetiştiren fakültelerden edindikleri deneyimlerin dışında çok az araştırma yapan öğretmen olmasına rağmen 37 kişi kariyerlerini geliştirmede araştırmanın onlara yardımcı olacağına inanmaktadır. Düzenli olarak sınavlara girmek, gelişim için dönüt vermek, öğrencileri sevmek ve onların sorunlarını çözmek gibi bazı boyutlar da elde edilmiştir. Öğrencilerle

yakın ilişkide bulunmak, öğrencileri tanımak ve onların sorunlarını çözmek ifade edilen diğer boyutlar arasındadır. Örneğin; *"Öğrencilerle yakın ilişki içerisinde olmak, öğrencileri tanımak ve onların sorunlarını çözmek"*. Bu örnekteki gibi ifadeler bazı öğretmenlerce dile getirilmiş olsa da (30), Timperley (2008) *"mesleki öğrenmede değerli öğrencilerden gelen çıktıların önemli olduğuna"* vurgu yapmaktadır. Öğretmenlerin öğrenmeyle ilgili inançlarını şekillendirmede öğrenme ve öğretme tutumlarının, değerlerin, kuramların ve geçmiş deneyimlerinin etkili olduğu söylenebilir (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Yukarda belirtilen öğretmen yanıtları, öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik mesleği gelişimine ilişkin deneyimleri ve inançları çerçevesinde açıklanmıştır.

c.) Mesleki gelişimde sınırlılıklar

Akademik anlamda düzey atlamak amacı ile bir seminere, atölye çalışmasına veya bir derse katılabilmek için öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi etkinlikleri adına kullanılabilecek maddi kaynakların olması gerekir (Johnson, 2009b). Ek gelir elde etmek için başka işler yapmak, ev işlerine vakit ayırmak zorunda olmak ve yoğun bir programa sahip olmak gibi nedenlerle Ugandalı öğretmenler mesleki gelişim etkinliklerine zaman ayıramadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Abdal-Haqq'a göre (1996), *"Öğretmenler yeni kavramları ve yetenekleri öğrenmek, yeni tutumlar geliştirebilmek, araştırmak, tartışmak, yansıtmak, değerlendirmek, yeni yaklaşımları denemek ve bu yaklaşımları uygulamaya aktarmak, bireysel mesleki gelişimlerini planlamak için zamana ihtiyaç duymaktadır."* (s.2).

Sonuç

Yukarıda belirtilen bulgu ve tartışmalara göre, öğretmenler öğretmenlik meslek gelişimine ilişkin dar bir görüş ve anlayışa sahiptir. Ancak, bu durum maruz kaldıkları gerçeklerin sonucunda ortaya çıkmış olabilir. Eğitimde yeni eğilimler ve konular maddi kaynakların yetersizliğinden dolayı Uganda eğitim sistemine kolaylıkla uygulanamamaktadır. Bu çalışmada vurgulanan boyutlardan birisi öğretmenlerin, müdürlerin ve hükümetin maddi ve manevi desteğinin yetersiz olduğudur. Birçok durumda öğretmenler kendi birikimlerini kullanmaktadır ve birçoğu düşük gelirlerinden dolayı birikim yapamamaktadır. Öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi için kurumsallaşmış birimler yetersizdir. Bu birimler öğretmenlerin gelişimi için uygun imkânları sağlayabilir. Bu yüzden mesleki gelişimlerini sağlamaya çalışan öğretmenler girişimlerinde başarısız olmaktadır.

Öneriler

Bu araştırma, tüm öğretmenlerin öğretmenlik meslek gelişimi etkinliklerine eşit bir şekilde erişebilmesi için öğretmenlik meslek gelişiminin hükümet tarafından kurumsallaşmasının altını çizmektedir. Uganda eğitim fakültelerinde öğretmen eğiticilerinin mesleki gelişim konusunda rehberlik edebilmeleri için Makerere Üniversitesi

Eğitim Fakültesi'nde öğretmen eğitimi dersi konulmalıdır. Bununla birlikte öğretmenler hükümet veya eğitim fakülteleri tarafından öğretmenlik mesleğini geliştirecek etkinliklere katılmaları için teşvik edilmelidir.

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