

Teachers' Engagement in and Practice of Continuous Professional Development: Factors Affecting CPD's Implementation in Primary Schools

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Abstract: As knowledge is dynamic, what is new today becomes obsolete tomorrow which warrants the need to upgrade or update one's professional understanding of the field. The purposes of this study were twofold: unveiling the current status of continuous professional development (CPD) implementation and divulging those factors that affect teachers' engagement in the practice of CPD. Participants were selected purposefully from teachers, principals and supervisors, and data were collected using interviews, focus-group discussions, open-ended questionnaires and informal discussions. Using qualitative data analysis methods, major categories emerged. From the results it was found out that the status of CPD practice was not that much effective and all the stakeholders were hesitant about its effectiveness. Teachers engaged in CPD were not making the most effective use of it. They associated it with other issues often unrelated to the purposes of CPD. Emphasis on generic contents of training materials, lack of ownership, inconsistencies on its provision, disparity of knowledge among teachers, and supervisors and principals, and conceptual problems about CPD were among the identified factors that hindered its effective implementation. More importantly, the core owners, viz.; teachers, also seemed to have a gloomy picture of its effectiveness. Some possible interventions were suggested based on the findings.

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Introduction

With the advent of the New Education and Training Policy in Ethiopia in 1994, several educational reforms have been introduced to the sector. One of the focuses and priority areas of the policy was teacher education program (TGE, 1994). Of the teacher training programs, in-service training of teacher education was given much attention with the intention to foster the competence of teachers. It is to be noted that Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO) was introduced, after studies on the quality and effectiveness of teacher education in Ethiopia indicated the need for the introduction, in order to ensure provision of quality education to learners as stipulated in the policy, to enhance the quality of student-teacher performances, and to mitigate the challenges of teacher education.

Based on the research findings, a policy that aims at directing and governing the education system as a whole and particularly the training of teachers has been introduced. In the policy document, various issues are addressed and eye-catching mission statements are expounded. For instance, the policy makes very explicit statement that clearly indicates what competences and professional as well as personal attributes teachers should possess after they go through the teacher education program. In other words, the statement reads,

the Ethiopian teacher education program is committed to producing competent teaching staff who have the desired academic knowledge, sufficient professional skill, appropriate citizenship, attitudes and skills, and those ethical values enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution (MoE, 2003, p. 5).

This part of the mission of the program entails teachers to develop pertinent knowledge, skills and values to effectively and efficiently undertake their professional career.

In line with this, the program envisages specific competencies to be attained by teachers at various levels of education provided in teacher training institutions, wherein the trainees pass through pre- or in-service education. The competencies include producing responsible citizens, effective teaching of subject/s and contents, classroom management, mastery and management of areas related to school and education system; and values, attitudes, ethics and abilities essential to professionalization of teaching. Designing and initiating an in-service professional development program is one among the five prioritized target areas identified by MoE (2003). In line with this, a number of scholars underline that teachers, to be equipped with the required skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that would enable their learners to unfold their endowed potentials, and to enhance their competencies and to professionally accommodate a range of interests and attitudes of the learners in classrooms, should be provided with continuous, up-to-date and relevant training along with their everyday professional practices. This urgency of professional development emanates from the ever changing and dynamic nature of professional knowledge, and increasing technological and social complexities that require teachers to cope with the challenges of undertaking a successful teaching learning activity.

Though professional development needs day-to-day painstaking efforts by teachers to help them cope with the demands of the changing situations, a systematic and ongoing in-service professional development for teacher educators also promotes their confidence in their teaching profession and enables them to develop skills and update their knowledge of theory and practice in education (Livingstone, Woods and Leu, 2002). Stating the need for professional development for teachers, Eurydice (1995), cited in Karagiorgi and Symeou (2005, p. 31), noted, “complex challenges in education, such as increasingly diverse student populations, new technologies and rigorous academic standards and goals have led to the emergence of the concept of continuing professional development within the process of lifelong learning.” In line with these ideas, Villegas-Reimers (2003, p.

142) argued, "the more opportunities the teachers have to be both subjects and objects of educational reform, the more effective the reform and the teachers' work is." Apparently, it is essential that the educational system provide teachers with professional development opportunities to 'relearn and reconstruct' their professional knowledge so as to enhance their professionalism (Rizvi and Elliott, 2007).

It seems there is consensus about CPD among scholars that individuals who are involved in such programs experience continuous improvement in their professional commitments, skills and knowledge. For instance, Pedder, Storey and Opfer (2008) reported that teachers who participated in CPD had a chance to develop their individual professional skills and knowledge and increased awareness of teaching and learning issues. Moreover, Villegas-Reimers (2003, p. 67) contended that participation in professional development programs resulted in the change of "teachers' beliefs and practices, students' learning, and on the implementation of educational reforms."

Plethora of literature testifies the impact and positive outcomes of continuous professional development on teachers' work both in and outside of the classroom (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). The essence of researchers in the area unveils that teacher education is challenging and demanding, and that teachers are expected to update their pedagogical knowledge and to invest strenuous efforts to acquaint themselves with the professional skills needed to perform their professional career.

Cognizant of such nature of teacher education and the significance of CPD in bringing about improvement in the teaching learning process, the Ministry of Education decided that CPD be given in schools to update teachers' professional knowledge, and to enhance their competence and professional attitudes.

However, there are debates whether the participation of teachers in school-situated CPD programs emanates from the major goals of CPD,

or from the strings attached to it such as recruiting, promoting, or demoting of teachers. Furthermore, there are a range of questions raised on the quality and practices of CPD training offered in schools.

Needless to say, when teacher education is supported with training based on the interests and needs of the trainees, a training designed after gaps between actual performances and expected performances, it could have fruitful outcomes; however, it would be futile to invest on such an endeavor if trainees do not give due consideration for and place strong value on it. Particularly, this is imperative when teachers are updating and upgrading themselves to different levels of qualifications through the program. Most often when teachers are exposed to a situation to continually develop their performance, it should be in alignment with their felt needs in skills and knowledge so that the program could promote their self-concept thereby enabling them to handle their students' needs and to enhance the content and pedagogic knowledge required of them.

Apparently, it is possible to conclude that engagement in CPD results in promoting reflective practices among teachers especially when it is designed to improve individuals' attributes, knowledge, understanding, and skills. CPD also offers teachers the opportunities to satisfy their individual academic needs and improve their professional practices. However, it is common to observe that the conditions that teachers in the primary schools face are not congenial and supportive.

On the other hand, in circumstances where currently the World is characterized by rapid technological and scientific revolutions, and social and political changes, demands and expectations become so complex; teachers, supervisors, principals and other educational officers who have direct contributions to such developments should be equipped with relevant knowledge, values and skills. This would enable them to professionally provide quality education for students and meet what is expected of them.

In recent years, the work of teachers and other educational officers in Ethiopian schools has changed significantly due to a number of educational reforms and new developments introduced into teacher education. One of these is the CPD introduced by the Ministry of Education. Though familiar among professionals and officials, CPD is a recent phenomenon both theoretically and practically in Ethiopia. It was formally introduced in Ethiopia in 2003.

The introduction of CPD coincided with the public outcry of the presumed decline in the level of the quality of education in the country. In other words, to order to arrest the declining trends in the quality of education, all concerned stakeholders - teachers, parents, students, educators, the central and the local governments and other stakeholders – sought for some panacea consisting of six-packages or programs which included CPD. This package was designed to enhance teachers' competence, skills and knowledge and thereby enhance the quality of education in the country.

Currently, CPD programs are underway in different primary schools of Amhara Region. The program was launched in primary and secondary schools in 2006/7 (1999 E.C.) Teachers, based on modules given to them, take courses as scheduled by their schools. From repeated visits and exposures to schools as well as training provisions rendered to teachers and other school administrators, it is observed that there are serious problems that seek attention regarding the conduct of CPD to teachers. There are issues worth investigation. In other words, our interactions with the trainees during the training provided us an immense opportunity to sense teachers' participation in CPD and to sense the prevalence of some problems that influence the provision of CPD. From the general observations we made, the comments we collected from the participants of the training, and informal discussions we made with them, it seemed that teachers had no positive attitudes towards the training and the practice of CPD. This initiated us to critically investigate and understand those factors that affect engagement of teachers in practising CPD. Based on these, we

formulated the following questions: What is the status of CPD practice in primary schools? What are the factors that affect teachers' effective engagement in practicing CPD?

As mentioned above, providing teachers with professional development opportunities is an integral part of the teaching learning process in Ethiopia. However, there seem to be a number of factors that impinge upon the success of CPD program implementation. Hence, the purpose of this study is to unveil the status of CPD's implementation in the selected schools. In addition, the study tries to explore those factors that hinder the effective implementation of CPD.

Accounts of the research can benefit those who are involved directly or indirectly in the program (teachers, supervisors, principals and educational officers) to revisit or strengthen their practice of the CPD. By and large, the results may help these stakeholders to find solutions to challenges teachers face in practicing CPD and in the effort towards fostering their own and school performances. Moreover, as the goal of CPD is to enhance teachers' effectiveness that would lead to quality education and school improvement to maximize student learning and performance, the results may help education bureau to consider ways of improving the provision of CPD and to devise some intervention mechanisms to solve the problems related to the training and practice of CPD in schools.

The Concept of CPD and Factors Affecting its Implementation

Teachers' professional development is the term that educators use to describe the continuing updating and/or upgrading of teachers, administrators, and other school employees. Guskey (2002) described professional development programs as systematic efforts to bring change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students by developing or enhancing the knowledge and competence. As basic professional

development activity, CPD consists of reflective activities designed to improve an individual's attributes, knowledge, understanding and skills. It supports individual needs and improves professional practice.

Nevertheless, CPD is not an easy concept to define. This is because defining CPD relies on what educational tradition we have and the views we have of what a professional is. CPD is said to have been coined by Richard Gardner, who was in charge of professional development for the building professions at York University in the mid-1970s (Gray, 2005). To Gray, CPD holds the idea that individuals aim at continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge, beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job. That is, the individual is now responsible for his or her lifelong career development, under the umbrella of the school or schools (Gray, 2005). To this end, there are various definitions of CPD in the literature. For instance, Craft (2000, p.9) defined CPD as "all types of learning undertaken by teachers beyond the point of initial training". On the other hand, others conceptualized it as any activity that increases the skills, knowledge or understanding of teachers, and their effectiveness in schools. Nevertheless, CPD is a far-reaching activity throughout the continuum of teacher education and professional practices, and it, therefore, stands as a professional imperative of every teacher, and at the same time it is also a prerequisite for enhancing the quality of education.

CPD, seen in a broader view, refers to continuing development of multi-faceted competencies inherent in educational practice, covering wider domains of professionalism needed for high quality professional performance. Although CPD designates the period commencing after completion of an initial training, it has much further implications. CPD activities have a basis in the life-long learning process, starting when the student is admitted to teacher training and continuing as long as s/he is engaged in professional activities. Friedman et al. (2000) posited that the most commonly cited definition of CPD is "the systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge

and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individual's working life." This definition explicitly elucidates the multiple purposes of CPD which include: (a) maintaining knowledge and skills or keeping up-to-date; (b) improving and broadening knowledge and skills- intended to support future professional development, and (c) developing personal qualities necessary to execute professional and technical duties. Similarly, CPD embraces the idea that individuals aim at continuous improvement in their professional skills and knowledge beyond the basic training initially required to carry out the job (Gray, 2005).

According to the Ministry of Education CPD framework, "CPD is conceptualized in terms of updating (where teachers involve themselves in continuous improvement of their knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy) and upgrading (where teachers engage in additional study outside their regular work to promote themselves to the next academic level)" (MoE, 2009, p. 16). In this framework, the aim of CPD is "to improve the performance of teachers in the classroom in order to raise student achievement and learning. It is a career-long process of improving knowledge, skills and attitudes, centered on the local context and particularly classroom practice" (MoE, 2009. p. 15).

From the above definitions, CPD can be noted and understood in this research as an activity designed to contribute to the learning of teachers who have completed their initial training. It aims at bringing about a change in teachers' professional attitudes, beliefs, values and practices, which consequently results in improved learners' performance.

There are many personal and organizational factors that hinder the effective implementation of CPD in schools. According to Brekelmans, Poell, and van Wijk (2013), at the organizational level, CPD is affected by organizational strategy, commitment of key decision makers, and

the availability of internal infrastructure. In addition, both the individuals' and the organizations' commitment to CPD and ability to implement CPD, including professional development planning, learning culture, and the dynamics of change (Hemmington, 2000, cited in Brekelmans, Poell & van Wijk, 2013) have a major role in implementing effective CPD.

Acquiring clarity of the goals of CPD has critical importance for its successful implementation. In this regard, a professional development program will have a greater probability of success when the learning goals are clear at all levels (Chappuis, Chappuis & Stiggins, 2009).

Positive attitude and strong belief of teachers towards CPD critically affect the implementation of CPD in schools. In addition, CPD programs provided for teachers need to have direct relevance in filling the gaps teachers have in their effort to help their students and improve their profession. When teachers believe that engagement in CPD would have relevance in meeting their professional needs, it is very likely that its implementation becomes effective. For instance, Lessing and de Witt (2007) contended that teachers become willing to participate in CPD workshops and practice it when they see its significance and gain something that enables them to cope up with challenges of teaching and meeting their learners' various needs.

Another factor worth mentioning is quality of leadership support provided to teachers in their effort to exercise various CPD activities in schools. For instance, school leaders could play a great role in creating a culture that supports and motivates teachers to engage in CPD. School leaders could help teachers understand that improving practice by acquiring new knowledge and skills is a professional obligation and that the work of becoming a great teacher is a career-long endeavor (Chappuis, Chappuis, and Stiggins, 2009). These scholars also affirmed that for effective CPD to happen in schools, it demands to create an understanding of the process, address the skills needed for self-directed learning and provide facilitators with adequate support. To

sum up, literature portrays that there are a number of factors that affect the successful implementation of CPD. Yet, the influences of these factors vary with the type of context and the type of CPD activities delivered in schools. Hence, it is worth identifying the most pertinent factors that influence the implementation of CPD in the selected schools under this study.

Methods of the Study

This research is guided by the interpretive paradigm and aimed at unveiling CPD implementation status and giving a descriptive analysis of the factors affecting teachers' engagement in practicing it in purposively selected schools in North Gondar Zone. The research design includes detailed interviews with teachers, supervisors, principals and facilitators.

The target populations of the study were teachers of four primary schools who were participating in CPD training, their principals and supervisors. A total of 47 participants (3 supervisors, 4 principals, 5 CPD facilitators and 35 teachers) participated in the study. A purposive sampling technique, based on their involvement and experience in CPD, was employed to select them.

To collect data from the sample participants, unstructured interviews were used for both individual and focus group discussions. The interviews were conducted in three sections: the first was made with selected supervisors and principals. The second section included a focus group discussion with teachers. The third segment was with teachers to investigate the factors that impinge upon their practice from different directions. During interviews, a series of questions were presented to the participants to help them reflect on their experiences and they were made to express their views on the process of CPD. Other data collection instruments including observations and field notes were also used. In addition, open-ended questionnaire was designed

for teachers to triangulate the data collected through interviews and focus groups discussion. Observations were made during their training participation. Open-ended questionnaire was also used with similar teachers who participated in interviews to get additional data that may be helpful to fill the gap where the participants had skipped or deemphasized during the interview sessions.

Discussions were made in Amharic and all sessions were tape-recorded. The researchers transcribed and analyzed the data to generate appropriate categories to understand the underlying factors that either facilitate or hinder teachers' engagement in practicing CPD. In addition, to produce reliable data, field-notes and informal discussions were made with teachers during the training. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptions specifically using narration, categorization and theme analyses.

Results and Discussion

Based on the research questions, two themes were identified for the purpose of data analysis: the status of CPD practice and the factors affecting the engagement of teachers' in practicing CPD. Under the second theme categories were identified based on the collected data.

The Status of CPD Implementation

Asked about how they could describe the status of CPD practice in their schools, most of the teachers explained it as ineffective and unsuccessful attributing to various reasons often related to performances of supervisors, principals, and *woreda* education experts. Similarly, the teachers were not confident to explain its contributions to the enhancing of their professional skills, pedagogical knowledge, and improving their students' learning and academic performances. In fact, they were not certain whether the practices they undertook in CPD sessions helped them strengthen their capacity and translate the objectives stipulated in CPD documents into practice.

The following excerpts taken from the responses of teachers to the open-ended questions and interview transcriptions testify the status of CPD practice in the selected schools. The participant said,

from my experience, the objective of CPD is said to bring quality education by strengthening teachers' capacity. I did not see this on the ground; it remained on paper. My colleagues and I did not improve our students' performance.... The implementation process depends on the knowledge and commitment of supervisors and principals who sporadically led the program to be inconsistent in its implementation.

Contrary to this, professional development is said to be most effective when it is delivered by experts in on-site locations, when it is rooted in the realities of the school, when there is support from principal and when it is the focus of collaborative discussion and action (Little, 1993, cited in Hargreaves, 2000).

A principal who was asked about the practice of CPD in his school said,

CPD did not bring about improvement. Some problems are directly related to teachers' weaknesses. They never thought of CPD as a means to improve quality education. They merely consider it as a way of promoting from one career structure to the next.

Moreover, a teacher said,

we do not get clear understanding of the purposes of CPD when the training is provided. There is a major problem of understanding. Second, we do not participate in the CPD sessions properly. We are

simply sitting there until the time allotted for the session ends. We are counting how many times we meet and the number of hours we spend rather than evaluating the achieved results.

This was corroborated by another teacher from the group interviews. He says,

in my view, we started the training without any prior information concerning what CPD is and related matters. When I see the practice, teachers including myself are not willing to actively participate in the training.

As can be understood from the reflections, the teachers were made to participate in CPD without adequate awareness of the program's pertinence towards improving their profession. Another participant expressed disappointment on the program as follows,

in my school, the implementation is not satisfying. The *woreda* is too remote and it is difficult to get support from trained people. I am participating in the program because it is a must for us to go on with the job. Despite warnings from different directions, CPD is not achieving its intended objectives.

Asked about whether CPD is achieving its intended objectives or not, one of the participants also noted,

I am not confident to say CPD has brought about a change on teachers in their profession. Even teachers who have completed CPD need pressures from officials to conduct action research.

The participant added,

...this time, it is difficult to say CPD is appropriately practiced in our school. There is no one who knows the process of the training. Surprisingly, when one asks the supervisor and the principal about it, their response is "I have no idea, do it yourself". Teachers on their part consider it as an imposed duty. During the CPD sessions, teachers usually discuss personal issues, jokes, football games, etc., unrelated to the purpose of the session. When I go to the CPD session, I know in advance that I will get nothing from it. The training is offered for the sake of reporting that CPD training is offered in their schools.

Another participant, too, substantiated this by saying, "we are in it without having clear ideas and understanding about it. The program is implemented in a disorganized manner." As the responses unveiled, the status of the CPD practice seemed to diverge from the promises of the Ministry of Education that states,

The process [staff development and training] should recognize the needs and achievements of each teacher in terms of their skills, professional knowledge and personal growth, as well as serving the needs of the school. ...the process of staff development should be clearly understood by everyone, easy to manage and produce change in the classrooms (MoE, 2003, p. 113).

As can be observed from the reflections, the leaders who are supposed to provide professional guidance and emotional support are rather threatening and imposing themselves on teachers. It means the professional development has become more 'exploitative and

overextended' (Hargreaves, 2000) characterized by warnings as indicators of commitment on the part of the leaders (principals and supervisors). Hence, the findings of the study do not go in line with the current research outlined in the review of literature, which states that teacher professional development programs should get appropriate support to bring a positive impact on teachers' classroom practices. For instance, research by Rizvi and Elliott (2007) confirmed that teachers whose progress was noted and appreciated by their principals were found to develop confidence and improve their practice. It was also revealed that teachers who put their beliefs and capabilities into practice and sustain their professionalism were demanding administrative and structural support from the education offices.

In general, as indicated above, the status of CPD did not seem to be successful in the selected schools in achieving its intended objectives-bringing change in the cognitive, practical and affective aspects of the teachers. Basically, CPD should meet the demands of teachers to be successful. Lessing and de Witt (2007, p. 53) argued that CPD would be effective in playing its role if it is "worth the time spent and the scarifies made." They further said that teachers become willing to participate in CPD workshops and practice it when they see its significance and gain something that enables them to cope with the challenges of teaching and meeting their learners' various needs. CPD sessions that meet the needs of teachers and schools enhance teachers' enthusiasm for attending the sessions, which could ultimately engender quality education. The practice of CPD by teachers is crucial to update their knowledge and instructional skills. Unfortunately, this objective of CPD was not successfully realized in the primary schools under study. Previous studies also revealed a gap between what is intended and what is being practised in schools (Gizaw, 2006; Melakmu, 2010).

Critical Factors Affecting Teachers' Engagement in CPD

In this section, those factors that affect the success of CPD in the schools will be presented. The categories under this theme include conceptual problems; imbalance of CPD knowledge of teachers, supervisors and principals; imbalance between generic and subject related contents in CPD materials, inconsistency of training provision, leadership support and lack of ownership of CPD.

Teachers, supervisors and principals Conceptual Problems of CPD

Scholars in the area of teacher education consistently reported that professional development was most effective in schools whose senior managers, such as principals and supervisors, understood fully its potential for raising standards and were committed to using it as a key driver for school improvement and where teachers get support structures that allow them to participate in day-to-day work-embedded learning' (Calman, 1998; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Komba & Nkumbi, 2008; Walsh & Gamage, 2003). In addition, there is a wide range of literature that shows CPD has direct effect on teachers' professional development and students' performance when teachers get appropriate support and have clear understanding (Lessing & de Witt, 2007; Kwok-wai, 2004). However, participants in the schools under study reported that there is knowledge gap among teachers, principals and supervisors. For instance, some participants described and equated the purposes of CPD with making teachers busy so that they could lose spare time to participate in social and national issues. Such teachers' conceptual problem might emanate from either the insignificant benefit they gained from the process or their poor conceptions of the purposes of CPD. In this regard, the process of CPD should be purposeful and personally motivating, should raise individual awareness and consider the development needs of teachers' practice (Calman, 1998); however, the participants of this study reflected quite distant views to this notion. For instance, one of the participants stated,

I could not see the benefits of CPD except making teachers bewildered and feel boredom to accomplish their teaching tasks. In general, CPD is consuming our time that was useful in planning our teaching and helping our students in various ways.

Another participant appeared to reflect his observations of the trainees' participation in the sessions that divulge their poor conception by saying,

...the main problems of CPD include teachers' low understanding of the program....Teachers are considering CPD sessions as free time sessions whereby teachers discuss their personal and other unrelated issues to the purposes of CPD.

He further added,

They [teachers] see it as a factor that determines their promotion rather than as something useful to improve students' performance. There are also teachers who often politicize it.

Similarly, another participant plainly puts his muddled conception about CPD as,

... in my school, CPD has been practiced for the last three years. However, teachers are involved in it for promotion purposes and get the checklists filled. I always feel that CPD has come to school to make teachers busy because it is not practiced in other sectors except education.

Echoing this, another participant also mentioned CPD in the following way,

... in my view, CPD has come to schools to overburden teachers thereby bring psychological harassment and instability in their profession. Except filling out blank sheets, I did not see the relevance of CPD in improving our performances and students' learning.

As demonstrated from the responses of the interviewees, focus groups participants, and open-ended questionnaire, the gap stems from leaders' (principals and supervisors) lack of knowledge to offer practicing teachers with feedback and other necessary supports. For instance, one of the teachers contended,

in the *woreda* I am working..., the follow-up procedure is performed by people who have no idea about CPD. In some cases, I observe conflicts between teachers and supervisors and principals. The problems stem from lack of knowledge and skills.

Another participant asserted the presence of knowledge gap among teachers, supervisors, and principals and he further claimed this to be the reason for poor improvement made on the achievements of students as stated in the objectives of CPD training materials. He goes on to say,

...in my school, we [teachers] have better conception of CPD than the supervisors and the principal as we have the opportunity. There is clear lack of knowledge on the part of the principal and the supervisor as they have no chance as that of the teachers to discuss CPD issues. So, by any measurement, they do not have the ability to give us feedback for our works. We also have knowledge and skill gaps; that is why we did not yet bring any improvement on the part of the students.

Another participant similarly emphasized the existence of the problem by saying,

...there is serious knowledge gap between teachers and supervisors. The supervisors are supposed to give us feedback for improvement. The only thing we get from them is *their signature that testifies our completion of the work*. Nevertheless, they did not see the details of our work and give us appropriate feedback (*italics emphasis added*).

In agreement with the above reflections, another participant mentioned the principal and supervisor to be hindrances. He stated,

The major obstacles to CPD practice are supervisors and principals themselves. In the school I am working, teachers have commitment and knowledge compared to supervisors and principals. Apparently, it seems logical. But, they [supervisors and principals] are intervening in our duties and rating our performances without any knowhow of CPD.

In elaborating his view, he continues to say,

No one knows details of our work. What the leaders need is the number of participants who were attending the program so as to report to their officials than providing us support that contributes to our professional development.

As can be observed from the above reflections, it is clearly understandable that they have serious conceptual problem of CPD. They repeatedly considered CPD as having little or no impact on their teaching-learning activities as well as on their student' learning and performance.

Professional development of teachers can be viewed as having important implications for both their cognitive and affective aspects, which are "important in determining teachers' efficacy" (Kwok-wai, 2004, p. 57). Moreover, "the cognitive aspect refers to acquisition of pedagogical knowledge and improved instructional skills, which will help teachers' classroom teaching and management ...[which] is influenced by the teachers' beliefs and conceptions about teaching and learning....". According to this argument, CPD is not only a *sine qua non* factor which has an effect on the teaching-learning process, but it could have a direct bearing on their professional commitment, motivation and productivity. Nonetheless, teachers from the schools

under study invariably expounded their low cognitive status and poor attitude towards CPD.

Kwok-wai (2004) reported that if properly delivered, professional development training enhanced confidence by 68.3% and commitment (66.3%). This increase in confidence and commitment could be a driving force for teachers to improve their students' learning and their own productivity that leads to quality education in schools. The study of Lessing & de Witt (2007) also substantiated the results of Kwok-wai (2004). These researchers posited that CPD sessions should be devised in such a way that they enhance teachers' motivation and interest to attend the sessions. Unfortunately, however, some of the teachers in this study stated that the major reason for their participation in the program was not to update their knowledge and skills but rather for fear of losing their jobs due to their failure to attend the sessions. Most of them regarded it as a waste of their professional time. Previous study conducted on primary school teachers' perception and practice of CPD also identified teachers' perception towards CPD in terms of relevance, management and enhancements of students learning to be negative that in turn contributed to poor practice of CPD (Bimrew, 2012).

To effectively practice CPD as a means for professional development, creating clear understanding among all stakeholders is crucial. Obviously, understanding the purpose of CPD and planning the sessions carefully to make CPD effective and bring about the desired improvement in the teaching-learning process are determining factors. Anderson (2001), as cited in Lessing and de Witt (2007), stated that to be effective, CPD programs should be designed based on the needs of the teachers and activities should be "properly planned to support teachers in applying the knowledge and teaching methodology creatively and confidently" (p.55) as well as to achieve an overall improvement of education. Nonetheless, almost all the participants agreed on the presence of knowledge gap among themselves.

Furthermore, it was argued that, to be motivated for CPD programs, there should be clarity of objectives of CPD and “before the commencement of training, planners of training programs should reflect on what they wish to accomplish through the training” (Lessing & de Witt, 2007, p. 55). This signifies that *Woreda* education officials, school supervisors and principals should have expectations of CPD outcomes and should address them to the teachers, adapt CPD activities to the needs of the teachers and to the schools’ context. However, participants in this study uncovered that the officials lack knowledge of the essence, contents and procedures of CPD, which engendered knowledge gap between them and teachers. Similarly, another previous study identified lack of technical assistance to teachers, incompetence of facilitators and supervisors, and lack of provision of proper induction as hindering factors to the success of CPD implementation (Melkamu, 2010).

Though the Ministry of Education (2005, p.105) in its TESO document has underlined to make CPD “not just an issue for teachers but for all sectors with an interest in the education of students” and to strengthen the involvement of all sectors of the community to be actively and knowledgeably involved, it seems that the educational leaders involved in the study have neither the commitment to nor the knowledge about CPD, and this, understandably, affects the confidence, trust, competence and other psycho-educational and social aspects of the teachers.

Imbalance between generic and subject related contents in CPD materials

The intention of CPD is to provide teachers with opportunities to develop their knowledge, instructional skills, confidence, and teaching and personal efficacy. It should be based on their needs and the existing knowledge and skill gaps. However, this seems not to be the case in the schools under study. For instance, Lessing and de Witt (2007, p. 56) pointed out that one of the properties of successful CPD

program is “developing excellence by means of competence, confidence and enjoyment and adhering to teachers’ contextual needs.”

The material should be well organized, informative and precise so that teachers could get the most out of the discussions they make on the contents of the materials. However, this was not a case vis-à-vis the training materials used by the teachers in the schools. All the practicing teachers, supervisors and principals reported lack of specificity on the contents of the materials in relation to the subjects teachers were teaching. As claimed by most of the participants, this lack of specificity not only made them to lose commitment to participate in the different sessions but also to be unable to see the direct bearings on the subjects they were teaching.

As one of the participants stated,

CPD could have been worthy had it centered on teachers interests and professional needs. It must also be related to the subjects we are teaching. The materials we are taking are also boring and unclear. They need serious revision and adaptation to our contexts and subjects we teach.

Similarly, another participant, contending the generality and difficulty of the contents of the proper CPD provided in schools to directly translate into classroom practices, argued and suggested on how to use the contents in tune with the subjects they are teaching as,

... the program has failed to offer us relevant skills and knowledge specific to the subjects we teach. It was better if teachers teaching same subjects could discuss their common issues together. However, the program deals with very general issues that has little value to directly support the subject we are teaching.

Corroborating this idea, Villegas-Reimers (2003, p. 23), citing Baker (1999) stated, 'when comparing programs [professional development] focused on subject matter, or how students learn the subject, with programs which focus on pedagogy, the former had the greatest impact on students' learning.'

Therefore, one of the factors that severely affected the success of CPD was found to be the relevance of the contents to the subjects teachers were teaching. Of course, the knowledge teachers acquire about those general principles of teaching in the CPD manuals may transcend to different specific subjects. However general the contents may be, teachers who attend CPD sessions could benefit from the training if their attitudes towards the program were positive. Teachers were complaining about the generality of the contents of CPD materials which led them to the conclusion that they were inappropriate for their teaching. Though there are diverse factors that made teachers to make such conclusions, the proper CPD materials provided were full of general issues that teachers may find it difficult to apply and adapt to the subjects they teach. The teachers also pointed out that even when they want to apply them, there are no materials that guide them on how to put the principles in practical classroom settings.

Though availing additional materials in schools is indispensable to help teachers learn the CPD materials and update themselves, teachers claimed that there are no available reading materials to supplement their understanding of the contents. They reported that the only references they had at hand were the CPD materials.

Inconsistency of training provision and leadership support

As indicated by most participants, the organization and provision of the training in schools and even in the same school was different. It was also reported that its practice relies on the knowledge of the supervisors and the principals as well as the involvement of the *woreda* educational experts. In addition, there is lack of clear and standardized

guidelines where teachers could refer to accomplish their tasks. As reflected by the participants, there is also inconsistency among leaders in their provision of guidance. According to Calman (1998), whatever else, CPD requires leadership for successful implementation and to maintain its progress. The leadership role combines educational management, mentorship and co-ordination. However, many of the participants contended that they have been provided with disorganized leadership support from the concerned bodies. The following extracts illustrate this. For instance, one of the participants explained,

there are inconsistencies between principals and supervisors in the direction they are giving us. For example, one of them may accept when a teacher finishes his/her work ahead of the time allotted. But, the other may say you should complete all 60 hours in the year as planned.

Acknowledging some improvements brought about by CPD, another participant explained his dissatisfaction against the leadership support provided by the supervisor by saying,

in my school, I see some improvements but it is not as expected. The principal is giving us better support though he is dissatisfied by the *woreda* officials as they are not supportive except sending to the school letters that intimidate teachers. The supervisor is also frustrating us. For these reasons, teachers' commitment towards the program is failing.

Supporting this, another participant further explained the absence of clear guidelines as well as impositions on teachers if they fail to participate in the program and improve students' performances. He stated,

in my school, I observed inconsistencies on the provision of the training. There are no clear guidelines on how to prepare portfolio and conduct action research. The existing ones are also difficult to grasp.... So, how can one expect to improve students' performance without having relevant knowledge and skills for ourselves?

Supplementing the existence of loose support in schools, another participant said,

the leaders have no proper knowledge and understanding of CPD. For instance, when they come back from certain training related to CPD, they force us to go back and do the completed works again based on the new guidelines. This leads us to develop boredom and hatred on the training.

As explained by another participant the *woreda* officers do not escape from these limitations. He stated,

when I see the *woreda* officials, they simply rely on the reports sent by the supervisors rather than asking us about the successes and/or failures of the program and sharing our views on actual settings where the training takes place.

He also claimed,

when they [*woreda* officials] sometimes visit our school, they give us orientations on CPD but they have different understanding of what procedures to be followed and when to deal with the different contents in the material.

This participant continued to say,

the role of the supervisor is limited to distributing checklists and plans. We do not get support from this body. The only role they have is inspecting us whether we filled out the sheets they gave us and compiled documents. They do not read and thoroughly check what is written rather they simply put their signs to approve the completion of the work.

Another participant emphasized lack of strong support from the leaders by referring to their CPD related gaps. He goes on to explain his experience,

I did not see good support from the concerned bodies. They simply compile minutes and document it in the school. No one is concerned with ensuring the quality of the portfolio, its match with the results achieved in class, etc. they are not willing and do not have knowledge to deal with our questions. They are unable to facilitate and follow up our progress.

As stated earlier, Calman (1998) argued that CPD requires leadership for its successful implementation and enhancing the “software”, i.e., the psychological readiness of the teachers to make it effective. However, many of the participants under study stated that leadership with regard to CPD was poor, disorganized and inconsistent, and they did not get proper support during the sessions. This is a grave problem which could detrimentally affect the intended CPD goals, viz., lifelong learning, personal development, knowledge updating and thereby improvement of students’ learning and performance. Similarly, a study conducted to evaluate the status of CPD programs revealed that teachers were not provided with enough access to CPD opportunities; training was not determined based on systematic needs assessment

and there was duplication of efforts and less involvement of teachers (Melkamu, 2010).

Generally, the failure of the school leadership in providing proper support, mentoring the teachers in practicing CPD, and inability to organize, guide and lead teachers in CPD related activities was found to be a stumbling block for effective implementation of CPD. CPD can be effective when competent supervisors and principals plan the CPD activities, share their knowledge and skills to the teachers, provide them with constructive feedback, and guide the program in such a way that teachers can get both cognitive and affective aspects. Moreover, building professional relationships among teachers, providing them with opportunities to implant their learning in school activities, demonstrating respect as professionals and as adult learners and enhancing the support of external agencies at the local level (Rizvi & Elliott, 2007; Concoran, 1995 in Villegas-Reimers, 2003; Fullan, 1991) equipped with enlightened leadership support are among the issues that help teachers develop their professionalism.

Lack of ownership

The other problem mentioned by the participants of the study was lack of ownership. The predicaments concerning the practice of CPD tended to be aggravated by lack of sense of ownership among stakeholders. This was a critical problem persistently emphasized by all stakeholders. The basic questions that need to be answered include: who is responsible to appropriately mobilize it? What should be the specific responsibilities of the stakeholders? Should they all or merely teachers be involved in the training? As most participants plainly described, there is a serious problem of the sense of ownership as all the stakeholders push the responsibilities to one another including the teachers.

For instance, one of the participants replied,

...the principal, supervisor and *woreda* education officers are pushing the responsibilities among each other. They have no commitment and understanding except forcing us to carry out the tasks by hook or crook. ...Even some times the monitoring and checking of our work is made by the facilitators who are taking the course with us.

Another participant reaffirmed,

...there is no collaboration between the supervisor and the principal. They make each other accountable for all the failures rather than sharing and making common concerns. The only achievement of CPD in my opinion is making teachers feel apprehensive to each other.

Another participant however claimed the presence of a sense of ownership on the part of teachers. He stated,

...teachers have strong sense of ownership. However, the supervisors and principals, apart from telling us to cover certain amount of contents in limited hours, they do not help us. ...The supervisor and the principal do not have relevant knowledge and skills about CPD. They are concerned only about the completion of the training. They do not care about whether the program has any effect on the practice of the teachers. Hence, a lot should be done on following up of what is being done.

Another participant, however, came up with a conflicting view with the above that signifies lack of commitment and ownership on the part of teachers too. He said,

...all the actors in the program lack commitment. For instance, teachers are copying the works of their colleagues. The supervisors also do not check our works appropriately because of lack of commitment, knowledge and sense of ownership.

From the responses of the participants, it was evident that CPD has no proper owner who understood it and worked seriously for it to meet its objectives. This would result in ineffective implementation. The practices teachers acquire through CPD can be carried over to other activities in and out of classrooms to improve the teaching learning processes. Research indicated that teachers who believe and perceive CPD programs as enjoyable, motivating, educative, informative, and sources of personal and professional development tend to be committed, competent, and self-efficacious (Lessing & de Witt, 2007). Caldehead (1996), Flores (2001) and Richardson (1996) all cited in Kwok-wai (2004, p. 59) unveiled,

Teachers' conceptions about teaching and learning are beliefs driven, and are related to teachers' instructional decisions, teaching behavior and actions in the classroom ... [which] influence [their] judgment about what kind of knowledge is essential, the ways of teaching and learning and methods of classroom management to be adopted.

All these tasks carried out by teachers can be either enhanced or stunted by the quality of professional development practices they have been involved in. If there is no ownership that takes care of the program, it is not only wastage in resources but could cause negative repercussions in the psychological makeup of the teachers about their profession. One teacher expressed her discontent by saying, "we are here because we can go nowhere," which connotes the feeling of helplessness and disengagement that could be a precursor to burnout.

In sum, in order for CPD program be successful in developing the professional and personal efficacy of teachers and thereby students' learning and permanence, it need to have properly defined owner to guide, lead, monitor, and evaluate its implementation processes. Teachers should get appropriate awareness training programs that help them understand that they are the owners of CPD and what CPD is meant for them. In addition, other stakeholders (principals, supervisors and wereda officials) need to know and deliver their roles properly in helping teachers practice CPD.

The significance of CPD for teachers is non-debatable. What makes it questionable is how it is put in practice and evaluated. Researchers reported that teachers develop negative attitudes towards CPD as they "felt they had not acquired sufficient knowledge and skills to address" problems they encounter in classrooms (Swart et al., 2002 cited in Lessing & de Witt, 2004, p. 54).

In general, the success of educational provision depends on the quality and performance of teachers. The skills, knowledge, and attitudes teachers have about their profession determine the quality of student learning and performance. One of the mechanisms through which teachers update their cognitive and psychological aspects as well as their confidence, commitment and competence is provision of CPD. If there is a problem surrounding CPD, the whole effort may be futile.

Conclusion and Implications

To realize teachers' engagement in CPD, there must be an environment that supports their practice as the major issues are knowledge and commitment towards CPD on the part of teachers and their leaders. Accordingly, this research focused on identifying the factors that deter teachers' engagement from practising CPD by unveiling its current status.

The results in the study indicated that the CPD practice is not successful and all the stakeholders tend to be hesitant in performing their roles and were not confident to express the achievements of its intents. Teachers engaged in CPD are not making the most effective use of the CPD opportunities available to them; rather they associate it with political intentions and other issues often unrelated with the purposes of CPD.

Despite the presence of the dire need of providing professional development by government policies as well as by local officials, it was revealed that CPD practice is not yet achieving its intended objectives. The core stakeholders, teachers, also seem to have a gloomy picture about its usefulness, relevance, and appropriateness to their personal and professional development through updating their knowledge and pedagogical skills.

The results also revealed that there was inadequate follow up, monitoring and evaluation to ensure what the program had brought on the professional competence and knowledge of teacher.

A substantial number of participants also felt that they did not need to engage in CPD. A range of reasons were identified for their lack of engagement which could boil down to two major categories: cognitive and affective entities of the participants. The dominant problem that led teachers to think the program as irrelevant was poor conception they had about CPD. In addition, lack of institutional support and poor leadership were also found to be other problems. Unavailability or poor feedback system and lack of competent facilitators in carrying out the training were identified as setbacks. The school leaders mainly focus on putting pressure on teachers to complete the program regardless of the quality of the sessions and the change it brings in the knowledge and skills of the teachers as well as on students' learning. Hence, it is possible to deduce that CPD's status was not *in par* with the intentions of the Ministry of Education which planned the CPD to update teachers' pedagogical knowledge and instruction skills which would ultimately

improve the quality of education. Poor conceptualization of CPD, lack of proper leadership, incompetent facilitators, lack of reference materials and generic nature of the CPD materials, coercion rather than cooperation between teachers and leaders, negative affectivity of teachers to the program, and lack of ownership were some of the problems that are affecting its implementation and teachers' involvement in CPD sessions.

The responsibility of those who work in and manage schools, particularly those who are responsible for mobilizing CPD should put every effort to make CPD effective in meeting its objectives: updating their knowledge and instructional skills. As long as teachers spend time in CPD sessions and resources are utilized to run the program, there should be tangible outcomes that result in high student learning and performance. Hence, to make it more effective, the use of coaching on the part of the principals, supervisors and *woreda* education offices is crucial. They must first take in-depth training on CPD issues and the contents therein. The training should include contents related to enhancing managers' monitoring skills in evaluating the teachers' performances and providing feedbacks to the teachers as well as the impacts of CPD on the teaching learning processes.

The conceptual problem should be addressed by professionals to create understanding on the part of the teachers to engage themselves in CPD. In addition, constructive professional debate and ongoing process of reflective practices should be planned by educational offices and departments in schools to avoid confusions among teachers, principals, and supervisors. Likewise, the interests of teachers should be considered to make them share their expertise with people who have similar specializations, skills and knowledge. The CPD materials, to be more effective, should be reorganized in such a way that they can help teachers get the most out of the contents in teaching the subjects they have specialized for. In other words, the CPD materials should be more subject-specific rather than focusing on generic contents. The

generic contents are less relevant to teachers in applying to the subjects they teach.

Assignment of appropriate person to the program who plans, assesses, and takes actions vis-à-vis CPD practices of teachers is indispensable. This person can accomplish activities such as identifying individual teachers' needs, developing appropriate training methods, and fulfilling additional relevant materials.

Principals, supervisors and education officers and others who have direct interaction with teachers involved in CPD should exhibit an important ingredient i.e., emotional support equipped with professional guidance for sustaining improved practices in the schools.

As it has been unequivocally aired out by almost all participants, the program is not functioning as it is intended. Though it is considered one of the major components of the educational quality, it has been entangled with multitudes of setbacks that interfere with its effective implementation. Hence, developing understanding of teachers, school administration and educational experts about the essence and relevance of CPD as well as enhancing motivation of teachers to participate in the program effectively and to gain the most out of the program, much attention should be given to it and necessary inputs have to be supplied. But from the voices of the participants and our experience, it looks as if the program is negatively viewed and the stories about it are not encouraging.

In sum, it is necessary to work on the software parts of the program, i.e., on teachers' cognitive and affective aspects about the program and on the culture of the school so that teachers embrace it as one of the important components of their professional development. CPD provision needs to be properly planned, effectively coordinated and managed in line with what has been set out by Ministry of Education.

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