

## **Managing the Professional Development of Teachers: Challenges Faced by the Public Primary School Headteachers in Adansi South District, New Edubiase**

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### **Abstract**

Professional development for teachers is critical for improving educational quality and student outcomes. In Ghana, the Ghana Education Service has implemented a teacher professional development policy to enhance the quality of education. However, there is no mandatory training for teachers transitioning to leadership roles, posing challenges to effective teaching and school management. This study investigates the management of professional development for teachers in public primary schools in the Adansi South District, Ghana, focusing on the challenges faced by headteachers and the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 30 head teachers, nine circuit supervisors, and the District Training Officer through questionnaires. The study revealed several significant challenges: lack of teacher commitment to professional development programs, insufficient funds, inadequate time allocation, lack of incentives post-training, and a shortage of trained facilitators. These challenges hinder the effective management of teacher professional development and negatively impact educational outcomes.

To address these challenges, the study suggests strategies such as mentoring newly appointed teachers, active involvement of head teachers and staff in planning in-service training (INSET) activities and initiating resource provision for these programs. By adopting these strategies, head teachers can create a more supportive environment for continuous teacher development. These measures are essential for enhancing the quality of education and fostering professional growth among primary school teachers in the Adansi South District.

**Keywords:** *Professional Development, Headteachers, Education, Management, Adansi South*

### **Introduction**

Investment in teacher professional development is crucial globally. Crawford (2014) found that it enhances student performance and teacher competencies in the U.S. and Europe. This process yields social benefits, knowledge, and skill acquisition by teachers, and improves student academic performance, prompting many countries to invest in such programs. According to the OECD (2005), Sweden supports teacher development with salary incentives, paid working time, salary progression, and promotion.

The UK, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Canada, Switzerland, and the USA offer induction programs for new teachers to improve lesson delivery skills. Norliza et al. (2011) noted that developing countries also invest in teacher development to improve proficiency and education quality. Authorities allocate resources to enhance teacher competencies. Professional teachers should continuously seek better methods to meet student needs. However, more efforts are needed in teacher development, as it is vital for quality education and school improvement. Despite its benefits, this area often receives insufficient attention and is left to head teachers. Ghana recognised the urgent need for quality teachers to enhance its educational system quality, as highlighted by the "Preliminary Education Sector Performance Report" (2008: Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, MoESS). This report shows critically low proficiency in basic education, with less than 25% of youth reaching proficiency in English at Basic six (B6) and only 10% in Mathematics. The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (2007) further revealed low proficiency among Grade 4 and Grade 8 students in Science and Mathematics. To address these challenges, the Ghana Education Service introduced the INSET Project in 2003, aiming to improve teachers' knowledge of academic content for greater competence.

Several international and national organisations have supported initiatives to enhance teachers' professional skills and knowledge. Notably, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Ghana Education Service

collaborated to establish standards, core values, and ethics for the teaching profession, fostering the development of world-class teachers who can significantly impact pupils' learning and achievement (Ministry of Education, 2012). Schools are established to help society achieve its goals through teaching and learning, necessitating proper management to realise these goals. Effective management is crucial for the educational sector, as no school system can achieve its objectives without it. The primary school headteacher plays a vital role as a manager, creating a conducive environment to enhance teaching and learning. The school's success in achieving its goals hinges on how effectively it manages its teachers.

The Government of Ghana justifies its substantial annual expenditure on primary education through initiatives like the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFUND) for infrastructure, the Ghana School Feeding Programme in rural public primary schools, and capitation grants. Nevertheless, many educationists believe that the outcomes do not match the investment. Since the introduction of the Capitation Grant in 2001 and the Ghana School Feeding Programme in 2006, there has been a significant increase in pupil enrolment in Adansi South District's public primary schools in the Ashanti Region. The teaching staff in Adansi South primary schools comprises Senior High School leavers, holders of the Four-year Teacher Certificate ('A'4 year), the Three-year Teacher Certificate ('A'3-year Post Sec), and those with Diplomas and Degrees. Notable achievements include improved pupil enrolment and increased teacher recruitment.

However, insufficient focus on teachers' professional development presents management challenges for primary head teachers in the district. Quality education is inherently linked to quality teachers, who are essential for facilitating meaningful education and positively influencing pupils' learning outcomes. Due to significant changes in the curriculum, society, and the educational system, continuous training and professional development are essential for teachers to remain effective in this dynamic environment. There is overriding evidence that teacher quality in terms of preparation and qualification strongly influences pupils' level of achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2001).

Most teachers who lack knowledge in certain subject course content teach inadequately or not at all. It is for these reasons that the teacher needs to grow professionally to meet the demands of the changing educational system. Adentwi (2000) asserts that there is a need to equip teachers to be able to handle changes occurring in the curriculum through professional development programmes.

These programmes include individual development, in-service training and peer collaboration, study groups, peer coaching, or mentoring. Whenever drastic changes are introduced into the curriculum which teachers are not well equipped to handle, there is a need for the teachers to go through professional development programmes.

### **Statement of problem**

Enhancing educators' professional learning is vital for transforming schools and improving students' academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). To align with federal requirements and public expectations in Ghana, the Ghana Education Service introduced a teacher professional development policy to enhance education quality. Teachers, upon graduating from colleges and universities, are appointed as professionals without job orientation. Research indicates that enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge leads to improved student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Hence, professional development allows teachers to stay updated on new methods, perspectives, and policies, thereby promoting quality learning by enhancing their teaching skills and knowledge. Cardno (2005) notes the absence of mandatory training for teachers transitioning to middle or senior leadership roles, highlighting the necessity for such training to improve their competencies for effective teaching and leadership. Studies by Atsenga (2002) and Agala and Odebro (2009) also demonstrate a strong link between training and academic performance. Many primary school headteachers assume their roles without managerial training, facing new challenges. Effective management requires these headteachers to possess adequate managerial skills and sufficient human and material resources.

Continuous teacher training and professional development are essential for effective performance in an evolving educational environment (Atsenga, 2002). Teacher professional development is vital to achieving educational goals. Improving the national education system requires enhancing teacher quality and supporting their professional development, which should not be the sole responsibility of primary school head teachers, even with in-service training on new curriculum courses. Teachers often perceive their head teachers as lacking in-depth knowledge in these areas, leading to low-quality and irrelevant training, posing challenges for head teachers and affecting pupils' academic performance in the Adansi South District. Headteachers face challenges in finance, pupil indiscipline, inadequate staff training, poor community relations, curriculum management, and insufficient professional development for teachers. They often lack formal leadership training and are appointed based on their teaching records rather than academic qualifications and leadership skills. Research indicates that the quality of teaching is the most significant factor in a pupil's success. Many head teachers lack the skills and

knowledge to organise new courses for their teachers, often replicating ineffective learning experiences from their past. Schools in the district are under pressure to improve performance, and head teachers are increasingly expected to ensure these improvements.

### **Research questions**

1. Examine how the professional development of teachers is managed.
2. Explore the strategies used by the public primary school head teachers to overcome the challenges of professional development of teachers.

### **Methods**

#### **Design**

The research design is a descriptive survey. It is suitable to gather enough information on the issue under study from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time.

#### **Sampling and sampling techniques**

The study population encompassed 104 public primary school headteachers in the nine (9) circuits, all nine circuit supervisors, and the District Training Officer, all in the Adansi South District, New Edubiase, in the Ashanti Region. Out of this population, the researcher sampled 30 headteachers, one circuit supervisor, and one training officer through a stratified random sampling technique from each circuit. Three schools were selected from the smaller circuits and four from the larger circuits.

#### **Instrumentation**

A questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants.

#### **Reliability and validity**

The reliability of the instrument was determined through pilot testing the instruments. Piloting aims to help identify issues of ambiguity and uncertainty in the instruments (Kankam & Weiler, 2010). Through piloting the researcher established some items of the questionnaires that were not clear to the respondents. The questions were rephrased to elicit the required responses. The face validity of the instruments was assessed by three experts in research methodology: one from the Department of Educational Administration and Management at the University of Education, Winneba, and two from the Adansi South District Education Office.

#### **Data analysis**

At the end of the data collection exercise, questionnaires were thoroughly inspected for completeness and were analysed using the Statistical Package

for Social Scientists (SPSS) software because it is a quick and reliable way of processing the data. Descriptive, descriptive statistical analysis was used.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations concerning individual academics and key informants within the district largely focused on the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent. To ensure the anonymity of participants, instead of the names of the participants as a means of connection to their responses, code numbers, and code names were assigned to participants and schools for easy analysis. The participants were also briefed personally by the researcher to seek their consent for the study. Participation in the study was optional and open to only participants who were ready to partake, and they were also assured that there could be no expenses or payments made for contributions to the research. Finally, the researcher also reassured participants that the information gathered was only for academic purposes.

### **Results**

Table 1 below presents the demographic profile of the respondents involved in the study, focusing on key variables gender, age, academic qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience.

Table 1: Demographic information on the respondents

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variable Category</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
1. Gender	Male	23	77
	Female	7	23
2. Age (yrs)	20-29	00	00
	30-39	13	43.3
	40-49	14	46.7
	50 above	3	10
3. Academic Qualification	Diploma	12	40
	Degree	16	53.3
	Masters	2	6.7
4. Rank	Assistant Director I	2	6.7
	Assistant Director II	5	16.7
	Principal	6	20
	Superintendent		
	Senior Superintendent	17	56.7
5. Teaching Experience (yrs)	1-5	3	10
	6-10	7	23.3

	11-15	7	23.3
	16-20	9	30
	21 and above	4	13.3
6. Years as Headteacher	0-4	7	23.3
	5-9	8	26.7
	10-14	7	23.3
	15-19	4	13.3
	20 and above	4	13.3

Table 1 shows that the sample consists of 30 participants, with a majority being male. Specifically, 23 participants (77%) are male, while the remaining 7 participants (23%) are female. The age range of the participants predominantly falls between 30 and 49 years. Notably, no participants are under 30 years. The age group of 30-39 years comprises 13 participants (43.3%), whereas the age group of 40-49 years includes 14 participants (46.7%). Only a small proportion of the sample, 3 participants (10%), are aged 50 years and above.

The educational background of the respondents shows that most hold a degree. Specifically, 16 participants (53.3%) have a degree, followed by 12 participants (40%) with a diploma. A minority of the respondents, 2 participants (6.7%), possess a master's degree. In terms of professional rank, the respondents are distributed across various levels. The largest group is the Senior Superintendents, comprising 17 participants (56.7%). This is followed by 6 participants (20%) who are Principal Superintendents, 5 participants (16.7%) who are Assistant Director II, and 2 participants (6.7%) who are Assistant Director I.

The respondent's teaching experience varies, with a significant proportion having considerable years of service. The largest group includes those with 16-20 years of experience, accounting for 9 participants (30%). Those with 6-10 years and 11-15 years of experience each comprise 7 participants (23.3%). Fewer respondents, 4 participants (13.3%), have over 21 years of teaching experience, while those with 1-5 years of experience constitute 3 participants (10%).

The study's demographic profile regarding years of experience as a headteacher shows a diverse range among the 30 respondents. Specifically, 7 respondents (23.3%) have served as head teachers for 0-4 years, and another 7 respondents (23.3%) have 10-14 years of experience. The largest group consists of 8 respondents (26.7%) with 5-9 years of experience. Additionally, 4 respondents (13.3%) each have served for 15-19 years and 20 years or more.

### **To what extent does managing the professional development of teachers pose a challenge to the primary school headteachers?**

The first research question sought to assess the opinion of respondents on the challenges by Primary head teachers in managing the professional development of teachers in Adansi South District. The research question was addressed by asking respondents to rate items on a Likert-Scale about their knowledge in challenges in managing the need for professional development of teachers. The scale was as follows:

1 - Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3 - Undecided 4 - Disagree 5 – Strongly Disagree

The results of the general perception of respondents about challenges that are faced by headteachers in managing teacher professional development needs of Primary School teachers in Adansi South District are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Challenges faced by Headteachers in Managing Teacher Professional Development

Challenges	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness		Total
					t	SE	
Teachers are not committed to teacher PDP	1	2	1.43	.504	.283	.427	30
Lack of funds to organise INSET in schools	1	3	1.30	.535	1.621	.427	30
Inadequate time for PDP in schools	1	4	1.43	.679	2.029	.427	30
Lack of incentives for teachers after INSET	1	2	1.23	.430	1.328	.427	30
Lack of trained teacher PD facilitators to coordinate INSET	1	2	1.50	.509	.000	.427	30

Results in Table 2 show that with regards to whether how teachers were committed to professional development most teachers rated “agreed” to the assertion while minority of the respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The mean response on the assertion was 1.43 which deviated significantly by 0.504. This

response corresponds to “strongly agreed” with respect to the standard deviation.

This implies that most of the respondents agreed that teachers were not committed to professional development programs. Similarly, in response to whether head teachers lacked funds for organising INSET in schools, majority of respondents indicated “undecided,” while the smallest group of respondents indicated “strongly agreed.” The average response was 1.3, with a deviation of 0.535 from the mean response. On average, respondents agreed with the statement; however, most indicated “undecided” regarding the fact that the lack of funds to organise INSET in schools for teachers was a major challenge for head teachers.

Regarding whether inadequate time for teacher professional development programs in schools was a significant challenge for headteachers of primary schools, the responses indicated that most respondents "strongly agreed" with this assertion, while a minority "disagreed." The average response score was 1.43, with a standard deviation of 0.679. This indicates that, on average, respondents acknowledged that there was inadequate time for professional development programs in schools, despite a few disagreeing with the statement.

Additionally, respondents were asked about the lack of incentives for teachers after the In-Service Training (INSET) programs. According to the results, most respondents "agreed" with the statement, while a smaller group "strongly agreed." The mean response for this question was 1.23, with a standard deviation of 0.43, which also corresponds to "agreed." On average, respondents recognised that there was a lack of incentives for teachers following INSET training.

Finally, headteachers were asked if they lacked facilitators to coordinate INSET activities. The mean response was 1.5, with a standard deviation of 0.509, indicating that respondents generally "agreed" with this statement. The standard deviation suggests that most respondents concurred with the belief that there was a lack of facilitators to coordinate INSET activities.

The findings of the study also showed that the responses were positively skewed. Most of the responses to the statements of challenges in managing professional development needs of Primary School teachers by head teachers were agreed to by respondents except responses of lack of facilitators to coordinate which was normally distributed. This was confirmed in a normality test on responses. The Shapiro - Wilk statistics for all the 5 items or statements were significant since their  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ . This implied that the null

hypothesis that responses were normally distributed was rejected and concluded that responses were not normally distributed but skewed.

The first research question seeks to identify the challenges that headteachers face in managing the professional development of teachers. On average, headteachers noted several challenges, including a lack of commitment from teachers to engage in professional development, insufficient funds to organise in-service training (INSET) in schools, inadequate time allocated for professional development programs, a lack of incentives for teachers following INSET, and a shortage of trained professionals to facilitate INSET activities. These findings align with comments made by the Circuit Supervisor and Training Officer.

As Mc Gilchrist (2004) highlighted in his study, there are four core characteristics of an effective headteacher: recognising pupils' rights, having professional and high-quality leadership, concentrating on pupils teaching, and focusing on creating a learning organisation. These objectives are achievable through funding and teacher participation. However, in the part of the world where funding and commitment of workers are scarce, especially in rural settings, several challenges confront school managers. Crawford (2014) also asserts that it is essential that a teacher feels confident in the headteacher's ability, respects his/her abilities, and has an appreciation for his/her achievement. If the headteacher can assist his/her teachers to develop professionally then there must be fair treatment and mutual trust. But if there is a lack of justice, it will lead to a lack of confidence in the head teacher.

A study in support of the various challenges confronting headteachers in managing teacher professional development identified challenges such as lack of funds, commitments, incentives, and inadequate personnel (Crawford, 2014; Mc Gilchrist, 2004). In addition, Mankoe (2007) indicates that teacher professional development programmes are sometimes jumbled with the result that participants are invited to seminars or workshops without adequate prior notice which will enable them to make adequate preparation.

Also, Mankoe (2007) added inadequate time for teacher professional development programmes as being a serious challenge as there is no time allocation for teachers on the official school timetable to enable them to meet. It is now the duty of this headteacher to fix these programmes during the break which is just limited for any effective studies to take place, and this does not make any difference on their job. In corroboration with Mankoe (2007), Brown (2003) argues that teacher professional development programmes that are of longer duration and time span is more likely to contain the kinds of learning opportunities necessary for teachers to integrate new knowledge into practice. But if these activities are too short and offer limited follow-up of

teachers once they begin to teach. This results in teachers going back to their former way of teaching.

### **What strategies are adopted by the head teachers to overcome these challenges?**

The fourth research question sought to assess the opinion of respondents on strategies to overcome challenges by Primary head teachers in managing the professional development of teachers in Adansi South District. The research question was addressed by asking respondents to rate items on a Likert-Scale about their knowledge of strategies in overcome challenges in managing the need for professional development of teachers. The scale was as follows:

1 - Strongly Agree 2- Agree 3 - Undecided 4 - Disagree 5 - Strongly Disagree

The results of the general perception of respondents about strategies to overcome challenges that are faced by the headteachers in managing teacher professional development of Primary School teachers in Adansi South District and presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Strategies to Overcome Challenges of Teacher Professional Development

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness t	SE	Total
Headteacher s mentor newly appointed teachers posted to their schools	1	5	1.7 3	.90 7	2.062	.427	30
Headteacher s are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the schools	1	2	1.4 7	.50 7	.141	.427	30

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Funding of teacher professional development programmes is the responsibility of the headteacher	1	5	1.63	.928	2.217	.427	30
Headteachers appoint curriculum leaders to plan INSET base on teachers' needs	1	4	1.43	.728	1.971	.427	30
Resources for INSET programmes are provided from the head teacher's own initiatives	1	5	1.97	1.217	1.665	.427	30

Results in Table 3 show that with regards to whether headteachers mentor newly appointed teachers posted to their schools, majority of respondents rated “strongly disagreed” to the assertion while a minority of the respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The mean response on the assertion was 1.73 which deviated significantly by 0.709. This response corresponds to “agreed”. Taking the deviation from the mean into consideration the response corresponds to “undecided”. On average, most of the head teachers agreed or were undecided on the fact that mentoring newly appointed teachers posted to their schools. Similarly, responses on whether head teachers are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the school as a strategy for overcoming challenges showed that a maximum number of respondents rated

“agreed” while the least group of respondents rated “strongly agreed”. The average responses by respondents were 1.47 and the deviation from the main response was 0.507. This means that on average, most respondents agreed that when head teachers are actively involved in planning INSET activities in the school, it helps overcome challenges of teacher professional development.

Regarding whether funding teachers' professional development programs would help overcome some challenges, the results showed that most respondents strongly disagreed with that assertion, while a minority rated it as strongly agreed. The average responses by respondents were 1.63 with 0.928 standard deviation from the mean response. The interpretation of the results on average corresponds to “agreed”. However, taking the deviation in response into consideration, it can be inferred that most respondents were undecided about the assertion. Again, respondents were asked whether engaging curriculum leaders to plan INSET based on teachers' needs would help solve teacher professional development challenges.

Results from Table 3 indicate that most of the respondents rated “disagreed” with the statement while a minimum group of respondents “strongly agreed”. The mean response by respondents was 1.43 and deviated by 0.728. On average, respondents agreed to involve curriculum leaders in planning INSET. Finally, head teachers were asked whether resourcing for INSET programs provided by the headteacher's own initiatives could help combat the challenges. The results showed that maximum responses made by respondents rated “agreed” as they upgraded themselves. The mean response was 1.97 with a 1.217 standard deviation. This corresponded to “agreed”. Considering the standard deviation, majority of respondents were indecisive with the statement on the average.

The findings of the study also showed that the responses were positively skewed. This was confirmed in a normality test on responses. The Shapiro-Wilk statistics for all the 5 items or statements were significant since their  $p\text{-value} = 0.000 < 0.05$ . This implied that the null hypothesis that responses were normally distributed was rejected and concluded that responses were not normally distributed but skewed positively.

The second research question was to find strategies to overcome challenges of teacher professional development. Most respondents (head teachers) suggested that mentoring of newly posted teachers, active involvement of teachers in curriculum planning of INSET activities and provision of resources for INSET program form the head teachers' own initiatives.

The study of Steyn and Teclé (2008) reveals that, as a leader and motivator of the school, having the responsibility for the development of staff training

programmes school-based and assisting teachers. Particularly the newly trained to meet classroom challenges. He/she is to create a conducive atmosphere to enable change to occur. Also, Moos (2000) established that the expectation in England appears to be that the headteacher should bring his/her vision to school, whereas in Denmark the headteacher is expected to initiate the dialogue with the teachers to build a shared vision together with them. When teachers are part of the management process it will help carry change effectively.

Additionally, Cladwell (2008) indicates that it takes ten thousand hours of deliberate practices that promote continuous improvement to master a complex skill. This translates into about seven (7) years for those working in schools. Finally, every newly recruited teacher is excited and wants to be successful. Initially, however, they may find it difficult to do it successfully as they may be lacking in the necessary knowledge, expertise or experience (Anderson and Cawsey, 2008) and Mankoe (2007) also asserted that, coaching involves the essential steps taken to help teachers to acquire a teaching skill which they will use in classroom.

### **Conclusion**

The study reveals that primary school head teachers in the Adansi South District face significant challenges in managing teacher professional development, including a lack of teacher commitment, insufficient funds for INSET activities, inadequate time allocation, a lack of post-INSET incentives, and a shortage of trained facilitators. To address these issues, head teachers should mentor newly appointed teachers, actively engage in planning INSET activities, and take initiatives to secure resources. Encouraging a culture of continuous learning through motivational sessions and involving teachers in decision-making can enhance their commitment. Additionally, integrating professional development into the official school timetable can ensure adequate time for these activities. To address the shortage of facilitators, schools should train staff members and collaborate with teacher training colleges and educational consultants to bring in external expertise. Implementing these strategies is crucial for fostering professional growth among teachers and improving education quality in the district.

### **Ethical Statement**

The Department of Educational Administration and Management, University of Education Winneba gave an introductory. Also, the Adansi South District education directorate gave the go-ahead for the research to be conducted.

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**Conflict of Interest**

The authors affirm that there is no conflict of interest with regard to the publication of this article.

**Authorship Contribution Statement**

Tilibe: Conceptualisation, design, analysis and writing. Agbenyegah: Critical revision of the manuscript and technical support.

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