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### An Appraisal of Teachers' Professional Development in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja-Nigeria

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#### Abstract

This study assessed the professional development (PD) of primary and secondary school teachers in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Nigeria. A mixed-method research design was adopted, where questionnaires and oral interviews were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. A sample of 109 teachers from four purposively selected schools was used in the study. The findings revealed that a significant proportion of teachers (about 86%) have accessed PD; and about half, 48.6%, of the teachers have benefitted from government-sponsored professional development programmes between 2020- 2022. The appraisal of teachers' work is not regular. While the perceptions of the impacts of PD were mixed, most of the teachers rated it as good and excellent. Factors inhibiting effective PD are diverse, the most important ones being inadequate funding, poorly organised PD and non-personalised PD for teachers' needs and interests. It is recommended that more funding should be channelled to PD; more personalised PD opportunities with input from teachers should be provided; as well as regular appraisals and the provision of feedback on teachers' work.

**Keywords:** FCT, professional development, perceptions, teachers

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## **Introduction**

The quality of education in many developing countries is on a decline (UNICEF, 2000; UNESCO, 2005). The poor quality of education received by learners has led to about 130 million schoolchildren having low literacy and numeracy skills after at least four years in school. In some developing countries primary school leavers have a very poor quality of education that makes them only marginally better than unschooled children; an indication that the current approaches to education are failing learners and leaving them ill-prepared to face the challenges of the 21st century (UNESCO, 2015).

Learners' success and achievements depend on the quality of education received. While several factors are known to impact quality education, the most important factor is the quality of teaching (Lee, 2013; Mizell, 2010). Professional development has been identified as the most effective strategy that could be used to improve teachers' performance and learners' achievements (Rowe, 2020; Wegerif, 2019; Yoon, 2016).

Professional development encompasses all formal (e.g conferences, seminars, or workshops; collaborative learning, a course at a college or university etc) and informal processes (e.g discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research, observations of a colleague's work, or other learning from a peer) that bring about positive changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes (Mizell, 2010; Wegerif, 2019)

The current state of quality of education in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, the administrative capital of Nigeria, has given rise to concerns among stakeholders (government, education agencies, private education providers, parents, and learners). The concern about the quality of education in the FCT has heightened as enrolment in primary and secondary schools increases placing pressure on human and financial resources. In addition, poor students' performances in the West African Examination Certificate and National Examination Council (school leaving examinations for secondary school graduates) from 2015 -2019; which was below 60% have further raised concerns about the outcome of educational processes (FCT Education Secretariat, personal communication, March, 2021).

While studies have been conducted on learners' achievements and educational management in the FCT (e.g Anyakorah, Oguejiofor & Kasimanwuna, 2021; Jacob, 2020; Ohakamike-Obeka, 2016; Okuchaba, 2021) there is a dearth of research on teachers professional development. Hence, this study is undertaken to examine the professional development that both primary and secondary school teachers have accessed and the teachers' perceptions of its impact. The objectives of this study are to (i) examine the level of access to continuous professional development among FCT teachers (ii) describe FCT primary and secondary teachers' perceptions on the impact of continuous professional development in the FCT (iii) highlight factors inhibiting effective professional develop-

ment in the FCT.

## **Literature Review**

### **Importance of Professional Development**

Many professions require continuous education to help professionals achieve optimal productivity and growth (Person, 2020). Teacher education in college and university, which provides the initial education for educators, does not provide the extensive range of learning experiences and once-for-lifetime competencies to make teachers effective educators. Continuous education for teachers known as professional development, also referred to as staff development and in-service training; offers opportunities to teachers to increase their content knowledge, and teaching competence (in various areas of teaching), and promotes overall effectiveness which positively impacts learners' achievement. (Courtney, 2016; Darling-Hammond, Hyler & Gardner, 2017; Mizell, 2010; Person, 2020).

Studies conducted by Karki (2019), Payne (2018), and Wegerif (2019), show that the professional development of teachers strongly affects their instructional practice, which consequently helps to improve their students' achievements and quality of education.

In Nigeria, there has been a decline in teaching profession status and it is looked down upon. It is not uncommon for trained teachers to leave the teaching profession to find more lucrative jobs (Jacob, 2020; Ohakamike-Obeka, 2016; Okuchaba, 2021) but according to Karki (2019), professional development promotes a positive attitude towards the teaching profession among educators, thus, extending the benefits of PD beyond learners' achievement. In Kana's (2014) study, the importance of professional development was summed as having long-lasting consequences for both the teacher and the student, when it is effectively conducted.

### **Forms of Professional Development**

In the past professional development was typically in the form of workshops and conferences. These forms of PD aimed at improving teachers' competencies are often referred to as traditional PD. The PD are usually organized by school districts or educational administrators, with a top-down approach; where teachers are gathered in a large room and resource persons disseminate the same information to everyone, regardless of their needs. In the past schools set aside days for PD, where all the staff members are mandated to attend workshops or conferences (Mizell, 2010; Person, 2020).

Personalised PD are training and learning opportunities that are designed to address the individual needs of teachers. Unlike the traditional PD, teachers are consulted to know what they need to improve teaching (Person, 2020). Personalised PD are diverse,

it includes: mentoring of new educators by more experienced colleagues, cluster groups or learning community networks, study groups (where two or more teachers focus on a shared need or topic), pursuing an advanced degree and coaching - where an expert teacher coaches one or more colleagues (Mizell, 2010; Karki, 2019)

The effectiveness of the PD and gainful experiences garnered are varied (Kana, 2014). The specific needs of teachers do not feature in traditional PD, as they are designed for all the teachers present. This form of PD has been observed to be ineffective and uninspiring, largely because the topics are generic and not content-specific. Thus, they produce very little changes in the instructional strategies of teachers. Because by their nature traditional PD is designed as 'sit and get'; teachers are not enthusiastic about traditional PD and they end up experiencing little or no professional growth (Courtney, 2016; Karki, 2019; Person, 2020).

Studies (Wan, 2011; Lee, 2013; Courtney, 2016; Wegerif, 2019) have shown personalised PD to be generally more effective than traditional PD. Some of the factors adduced for the effectiveness of personalised PD are its collaborative nature, sustained duration, active learning and content focus (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Person, 2020). The input of teachers in personalised PD and the generally high rating in its effectiveness reinforces a principle of andragogy 'that adult learners learn best when they have a role in the decision-making process. Adults learn better when learning decisions are made with them, rather than for them' (Knowles et al., 2012 cited in Courtney, 2016, p.40).

In Nigeria, inadequate funds have been identified as one of the challenges of the education sector which has affected the general management of public school plants and the provision of PD for educators and resources for quality education (Anyakorah et al., 2021; Jacobs, 2020). Anyakorah et al. (2021) opined that the paucity of funds for managing public schools means PD can no longer be left to the government.

### **Nigeria's Teacher Education**

One of the standards set for achieving quality education in Nigeria by the Federal government for all levels of education in the country is the appointment of suitably qualified persons as teachers. The minimum qualification for a person desirous of teaching is the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) which is obtained after a three-year post-secondary teacher training education. Universities train undergraduates who go on to acquire a first degree in education (B.Ed), and some others who want to take up teaching jobs after their degree program but are without teaching certificates obtain a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) when they undergo one-year training in a college or university (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (2013) enunciates the place of continu-

ous education in the National Policy on Education; because of changes in curriculum and the need for teachers to be exposed to innovation.

The quest of the government to improve the quality of education in Nigeria and ensure that education services are delivered by professionals; the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, the government agency, was established by an Act of the Federal government in 1993 (Federal Ministry of Education, 2004; Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council, 2013). It is charged with several responsibilities, to help promote professionalism in the education sector. Some of its general duties as contained in the Federal Ministry of Education (2004) include: determining who are teachers; determining what standards of knowledge and skill are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers; maintaining a register of teachers; regulating and controlling the teaching profession; and classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.

### **Research Methodology**

The mixed method research design was used in this study combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The oral interview provided qualitative data which complemented the data obtained from the survey conducted. Sequential mixed method, one of the strategies in the collection of data in mixed method research outlined in Creswell (2009) was adopted, where the survey which is the major source of data and involves a large number of individuals was conducted first and thereafter followed up the oral interview with a few participants.

Four public schools were purposefully selected for the study, two secondary schools from the Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC) and two primary schools from the Gwagwalada Area Council in the FCT. These schools were selected because they are among the first primary and post-primary public schools to be established in the FCT. The target population of the study were the teaching staff of the selected schools.

A questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data used in the study while an in-depth interview was used for the collection of the qualitative data. A non-probability sampling technique, voluntary response sampling, was used to obtain a sample size of 109 out of the 481 teachers. They were sent a link to the online survey, where eighteen questionnaire items were provided, for voluntary participation in the survey. The questionnaire was sent out in December 2022, at the end of January 2023; 109 copies of the completed questionnaire were received from the teachers; who voluntarily participated in the survey. Six interviewees, who were also part of the survey, were contacted and their consent was sought and obtained for in-depth interview in July 2023. The collection of the qualitative data followed the prescription outlined in Creswell (2009), for the phenomenological qualitative approach, where participants in the oral interviews

must be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied (in this study, professional development). The focus of phenomenological qualitative research for any researcher as stated in Creswell (2007, p.159) is "what the interviewees experienced with the phenomenon and how they experienced it". In this study, the "what" was each interviewee's PD experience and "how" was replaced with a rating of PD based on their experiences.

The closed-ended items in the questionnaire were analysed quantitatively using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) V21.0 and Microsoft Excel software was used to analyse the data obtained. The descriptive statistics used include range, frequency and percentages to summarise and highlight underlying characteristics of the data. The oral interviews were transcribed from the audio recording used at the interview for use in the study. The representation of the qualitative data is in text form, one of the three forms listed for the presentation of qualitative data in Creswell (2007).

## **Results and Discussion**

This session highlighted the characteristics of the respondents who took part in the survey. In addition, the level of access of primary and secondary school teachers to continuous professional development in the FCT and the perceptions of the impact the PD teacher has had are discussed. The answers provided in the oral interviews conducted are presented to help complement the responses provided in the survey.

### **Respondents' Characteristics**

A breakdown of the data from the questionnaire shows that about two-thirds (67.9%) of the respondents are persons teaching in secondary schools in the FCT, while the remaining 32.1% teach in primary schools (see Figure 1).

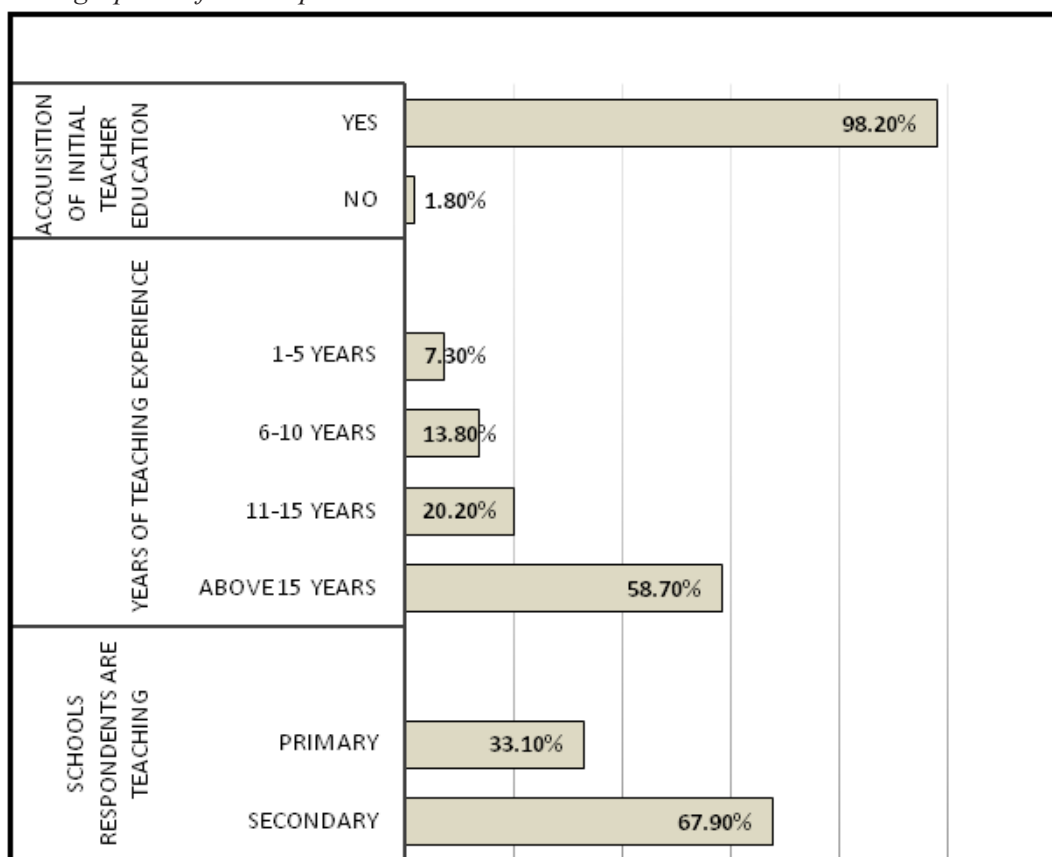
Respondents have work experience that ranges from 1 year to more than 15 years. This means there is sufficient coverage of responses from people who are relatively new to the teaching profession and those who have spent considerable years working as teachers. A very large proportion of the respondents (78.9%) are a teacher with work experience that is more than 10 years while those with work experience of 1-10 years make up about one-fifth of the respondents. With the level of long years of work experience among most of the respondents, it means most of the respondents can comprehend the issues being asked and the answers provided which will help understand matters of PD. Most of the respondents (98.2%) have acquired teaching certificates, which is indicative of the fact that they have been trained to take up the teaching profession. Only a negligible proportion (<2%) are without the pre-requisite teacher training education of any form. It means most of the people teaching in primary and secondary schools in the FCT have been trained as teachers. These results corroborate the data presented in The FCT Education Secretariat (personal communication, March 2021), where the proportion of qualified

teachers in primary and secondary schools for the 2018/2019 academic session was found to be above 90%.

Table 1 shows the demographics of the interviewed teachers; their years of teaching experience, subject areas and their initial teacher education. Their names have been withheld from the table to make them anonymous.

**Figure 1**

*Demographics of the Respondents*



**Table 1**

*Demographics of the Interviewed Teachers*

Interviewee	Schools Participants Teach	Years of Experience	Subject Area	Teacher Education Acquired
A	Primary	22	English	Yes (B.Ed)
B	Secondary	18	Geography	Yes (PGDE)
C	Secondary	15	Geography	Yes (B.Ed)



D	Secondary	20	Office Management/ Commerce	Yes (NCE)
E	Secondary	6	Computer Science	Yes (PGDE)
F	Primary	23	Health Education	Yes (B.Ed)

### Professional Development Among FCT Teachers

**Table 2**

*Formal Modes of Professional Development Accessed by FCT Teachers*

Access to Professional Development		Frequency	Percent
Participated in Professional Development (seminar/workshop/ conference/ course) in the last 2 years	Yes	94	86.2
	No	15	13.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Sponsorship of professional development (seminar/workshop/ conference/ course)	Government-sponsored	53	48.6
	School sponsored	17	15.6
	Self-sponsored	31	28.5
	not indicated	8	7.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 3**

*Appraisal of Teachers' Work*

Pattern of Appraisal	Frequency	Percent	
Frequency of Appraisal	Every work day	13	11.9
	Every week	23	21.1
	Once a month	13	11.9
	Once a term	27	24.8
	Irregular basis	33	30.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>	



The appraisal contains judgment on the quality of work	No	8	7.3
	Yes	101	92.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>
The appraisal contains suggestions for improving the aspect of the work	I don't know	7	6.4
	No	8	7.3
	Yes	94	86.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Tables 2 and 3 show two categories of PD the teachers in FCT schools have accessed in 2 years (2020-2022). Teachers can access different forms of PD, while some are provided within the school others are provided in different settings outside the school. A large proportion of the respondents, 86.2% attest to having attended conferences, seminars, workshops and courses; while less than one-fifth responded that they did not access these forms of PD. Most of the professional development (conferences, seminars, workshops and courses was government-sponsored); although it accounted for slightly less than half (48.6%) of all the access provided. Self-sponsorship accounted for slightly more than one-quarter, 28.5% while schools were responsible for less than one-fifth, 15.6% of the conferences, seminars, workshops and courses for teachers' PD.

Conferences, seminars and workshops are among the common forms of PD provided in the FCT by education agencies and schools; because it requires very little time and resources to put together. Regularly these forms of PD are held on school days, where an entire school staff are either made to gather in a large school hall (if the PD is being held within the school) or through a directive from the education board responsible for education management in the FCT, certain number of staff are mandated to attend the PD within their Area Council. The FCT administration is not known to sponsor teachers' advanced degrees, even though the acquisition of advanced degrees is a form of PD. Those who desire to acquire advanced degrees self-sponsor themselves. Sometimes, the acquisition of an advanced degree is known to play some role in the placement of teachers in leadership roles in various education agencies within the FCT. Hence, teachers are motivated to invest in their own PD.

Heads of unit/ subjects, and heads of schools (head teachers and principals) are expected to inspect lesson plans, classroom management and lesson delivery in classrooms every workday. These forms of school-based inspection/supervision provide opportunities for learning, feedback and coaching by experienced colleagues which all lead to professional improvement for teachers. This study shows that most of the appraisal (inspection/ supervision) conducted on teachers and their performance is on an irregular basis (30.3%). This pattern of appraisal leaves teachers' professional needs largely

unmet. Every workday appraisal, which should be the norm, accounts for 11.9%; which is not a considerable proportion. Most public schools in the FCT have a very large student population, it is not uncommon to have schools with many classes and a great workload for subject teachers. For teachers who are already overworked and who at the same time occupy the position of head of unit/subject; they have very little time within the school hours to carry out appraisal of teachers' work daily. Hence, the low proportion of appraisals that are conducted daily.

Appraisals are meant to provide feedback on the quality of work of the teachers, and this was seen to be the case as most of the respondents (92.7%) have received feedback on the quality of their work through the appraisals conducted. While 7.3% of the respondents did not receive feedback after appraisals were carried out on their work, this proportion although relatively small could have a huge impact particularly if the teachers are teaching many pupils.

In a follow-up question on whether the feedback on appraisals contained suggestions on how the teachers could improve on certain aspects of their work, the responses show that 86.2% of the teachers had suggestions (s) on how to improve on their work. The proportion of teachers (7.3%) who responded that feedback they had when their work was appraised did not contain suggestions on how they can improve on certain aspects of their work is the same as those who claimed that the appraisals they had did not contain judgement on the quality of their work, from their senior colleagues responsible for the appraisals.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Continuous Professional Development in the FCT**

**Table 4**

*Impact of Formal Modes of Professional Development*

		Frequency	Percent
Impact of PD	1.00 (very little impact)	5	4.6
	2.00 (below average)	2	1.8
	3.00 (average)	11	10.1
	4.00 (good)	35	32.1
	5.00 (Excellent)	51	46.8
	Not Indicated	5	4.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>109</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Respondents were provided with a 5-point linear Likert scale that ranged from very little impact (with a score of 1) to excellent impact (with a score of 5) for the questionnaire item: "What was the level of impact the professional development on your devel-

opment as a teacher?" The outcome of the professional development of teachers in the FCT shows that the proportion of respondents who felt the impact of PD was poor, below average or average was 16.5%. Most of the respondents have benefitted immensely from the various forms of professional development, as 78.9% of them felt that the impact has been good or excellent (see Table 4). This finding is corroborated by outcomes presented in Kana's (2014) and Wegerif's (2019) studies; where the impacts of PD were largely rated high and beneficial by teachers.

The in-depth interview conducted with six teachers provided qualitative data, which complimented data obtained from the structured interview schedule. The six teachers discussed their experience of teachers' professional development in the FCT. They have mixed experience with PD; while some saw their experience as poor, some others rated their experience and the impact of PD as good. None rated their experience as excellent. They related their experiences and rating of PD are presented as follows:

Interviewee A (English Teacher) said, "From time to time, workshops are organized for teachers. But government-sponsored training and workshops are few. The last workshop I attended was a workshop on phonetics. It was a worthwhile experience and I learned many new things." When the Interviewee was asked to rate the PD on a scale of 5, it was rated as 4.

Interviewee B (Geography Teacher) stated: "I have attended several workshops organised by the Education Board on ICT but none in my subject area." When the interviewee was further asked to rate the PD on a scale of 5, 4 was the rating given.

Interviewee C (Geography Teacher) revealed that:

*'It has been over 6 years since I attended workshops or conferences outside the school. Recently, a Non- non-governmental Organisation came to my school to train teachers on climate change and recycling. The resource person came well prepared, more than the government-sponsored training and conferences. The training was extensive and an eye-opener. It was not only talk and talk, they combined it with practical exercises and projects. I know some colleagues went for an ICT training organized by the Education Board, at a computer centre, The training was only Excel and Microsoft usage and has not broadened their knowledge base in ICT.'*

When interviewee C (Geography Teacher) was asked to rate the PD organized by the NGO on a scale of 5, she rated it a 3 and added that it was better than workshops she had attended before.

Interviewee D (Office Management/Commerce Teacher) stated: "Generally, in-service training in my school is not as frequent as it should be. The last major training I attended was when my Head of Department who was trained in the development of a learner-centred teaching method, did a seminar to train other teachers who did not at-

tend.”

When asked to speak on which form of PD would have the most impact, the interviewee (Office Management/ Commerce Teacher) added that:

*“The initiative from the education board for Professional Learning Community (PLC) is good; as it allows teachers to discuss their subjects and they can brainstorm on solving problems in their subjects. But it holds every fortnight instead of every week. Currently, in my present school, I have not benefitted much from that in my school; because I am the only one teaching my subject in the school and I have no other teacher to effectively interact with in my subject.”*

The interviewee generally rated the PD experience she has had as 2, when asked to rate her experience on a scale of 5.

Interviewee E (Computer Science Teacher) said:

*“I attended a seminar in 2022. It was organized by an international organization and was on learner-centred teaching methods. Many teachers from several schools participated. Some of the resource persons delivered their sessions virtually. It was organised to help teachers learn how to be innovative in our instruction practice... it was not well-organized. The organizers did not start the program on schedule and the welfare of participants was not adequately addressed... I benefitted more from the training organised by my school for management of students' behaviours.”*

The statement of Interviewee E is corroborated by Mizell (2010), who opined that “Educators benefit most by learning in the setting where they can immediately apply what they learn — in the school where they work.” Out of a scale of 5, when interviewee E (Computer Science Teacher) was asked to compare the PD organized by the international organisation and her school and rate their impact, they were rated as 2 and 4 respectively.

Interviewee F (Health Education) said: “I have attended seminars and workshops several times, but they were not as frequent as they should be. Some were in my Area Council while others were outside our Area Council.... They are usually in my subject area and increase my knowledge.” The interviewee was asked to assess the PD accessed on a scale of 5. The interviewer said if the PD is to be scored over 10, it is to be a score of 7 or 8.

### **Factors Inhibiting Effective PD in the FCT**

Several issues were highlighted by the interviewees as factors inhibiting effective PD in the FCT. Inadequate funding was identified by all the interviewees as a factor that limits the effectiveness of PD such as conferences, seminars and workshops. The inadequate funding in their opinion affects resources made available for PD. This finding

corroborates the outcome of Kana's (2014), Wan's (2011) and Okuchaba's (2021) studies, where the paucity of funds was identified as inhibiting PD.

It was obvious from the interview with the interviewees who teach in secondary school that most of the workshops they attended were ICT related, and the same skills were addressed at most of those; the use of multi-media and Microsoft packages. After attending these several times, they wanted more skills which they were not getting from the workshops; rather than the basic skills. Organising a one-size-fits-all workshop usually requires fewer resources and for the FCT where funding for education is inadequate this form of PD is usually one of the common forms of PD. This study shows the drawbacks of workshops, as it does not serve all the teachers well. Over time the motivation for teachers to attend this form of PD could become low, resulting in a lower impact on teaching practice. A similar finding was made in Person's (2020) study, where PD chosen by the teacher was seen to be more effective than traditional PD, where generic information is being disseminated.

Most of the interviewees (B, C, D and E) felt conferences, seminars and workshops were not being organised regularly. They felt most of the seminars and workshops were not personalized, and they had very little input into them. Interviewee C noted that there is an aspect of her subject she desired to workshop on but after intimating her school management; she is yet to have her professional needs met in the area specified. A similar finding was made by Frost et al. (2000) cited in Wan (2011) found that the impact of PD is usually very low when it is not relevant to teachers' needs. Similarly in Person's (2020) study, it was stated that while some traditional one-size-fits-all PD organised by school districts were successful, teachers' preference was for purpose-fit PD; where their needs and interests are taken into consideration.

Interviewees E & F mentioned poor organisation as a factor working against effective PD, particularly in the case of conferences, seminars and workshops. In their words:

Interviewee E (Computer Science Teacher) said, "Because there was a large number of participants, people who sat at the back hall were not hearing the resource persons ..."

Interviewee F (Health Education) said: "They were not organised and not well-prepared. Some of the workshops, particularly public health workshops, started behind schedule. They don't go to the major points early in the program, they wait until towards the end of the day's program/evening time before doing the main agenda; when participants are tired; that is when the resource persons would be serious..."

Sometimes the education agencies or educational administrators who organise conferences, seminars and workshops for teachers in the FCT are only interested in keeping up appearances of PD. Since feedback is rarely requested from teachers, after attending the PD; the organisers show very little commitment and accountability. As a result, the

essence of PD, which is to enhance teachers' professional practice, is not fully realised in some of the conferences, seminars and workshops organised in the FCT.

### **Conclusion**

The highlights of this paper are that most FCT teachers have accessed PD. While the perceptions of the impact of the PD accessed were mixed, most of the perceptions of the PD were favourable. Appraisals of teachers' work were most times conducted on an irregular basis limiting the opportunities for constant and sustained input for improved professional growth from senior colleagues. Among the diverse factors inhibiting effective PD in the FCT are inadequate funding, poorly organised PD and non-personalizing of PD to meet teachers' needs and interests. It is recommended that more funds should be made available for PD in the FCT. Also, PD should address the needs and interests of teachers and more PD at the school level should be organised more regularly.

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