

AN INVESTIGATION INTO TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the teachers' attitude towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD). Specifically, this study aims to compare the teachers' attitude towards CPD among three kinds of groups; age level groups (over 40 years and under 40 years), total service level groups (over 15 years and under 15 years) and Education Degree groups (pre-service and in-service). To attain the research objectives, the survey method was used and the used questionnaire contains (45) items for four dimensions (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence). All high school teachers of the selected sample of 17 schools from Naypyitaw Council Region participated in this study. Independent samples 't' test was used to compare significant differences between the groups. According to the results, younger, less service and education degree (pre-service) teachers have more positive attitudes than older, more service and education degree (in-service) teachers towards CPD. According to the results, 90.8% of teachers have a positive attitude towards CPD. They agreed that CPD can promote the competences of teachers and they have the willingness to continue their CPD to promote their competences. Therefore, CPD should be implemented at every school to promote the competences of teachers. Moreover, the Ministry of Education needs to recruit more effective CPD activities to meet the present demands of teachers.

Keywords: professional development, continuous professional development, personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence, social competence

Introduction

Teaching profession is based on vocational and personal skills and competencies, involves professional and ethical standards and models, and entails a continuous process of professional development. Positive teachers' attitudes and perceptions are fundamental for effective teaching. And teachers' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes affect their practice and influence the students' performance (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). Teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession have effects on their classroom performance and teaching practice.

The teaching profession has great importance in every society. The teacher requires two types of knowledge, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. And the teacher also requires two types of qualities personal and professional. If a teacher combines both types of qualities in content and functional areas, the teacher can achieve the objectives and may be called a good teacher or an effective teacher in the educational delivery process. (Craft, 2002).

In recent years, many countries have engaged in curriculum reform as a way to equip children with the knowledge, skills and competences needed for tomorrow. The main purpose of doing basic education curriculum reform in Myanmar is to implement a new curriculum that not only focuses on relevant 21st century knowledge and skills but also aims to mend deficiencies and weaknesses of the previous basic education curriculum.

According to the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP, 2016-2021), the new curriculum (KG + 12) is started in the 2016-2017 Academic Year from Kindergarten in basic education. In the 2019-2020 Academic Year, a secondary level new curriculum is started and teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) guideline is introduced for secondary teachers. The CPD program approach enables the individual teacher to reinforce and enhance their current skills, to take the change of their career development and ensures that both academic and vocational qualifications.

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Purposes of the Study

- **The main purpose of the study**
 - To investigate the teachers' attitude towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- **The specific objectives of the study**
 - To investigate high school teachers' attitude towards CPD by age level, total service level and education degree
 - To explore the competences of teachers by CPD and
 - To make suggestions concerning the implementation of CPD.

Research Questions

- (1) Are there significant differences between teachers' attitude towards CPD by age level (over 40 years and under 40 years), total service level (over 15 years and under 15 years) and education degree (pre-service and in-service)?
- (2) Do the teachers agree that CPD can promote their competences of teacher (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence)?
- (3) Do the teachers have a positive attitude or a negative attitude towards CPD?

Scope of the Study

The following points indicate the scope of the study.

- (1) This study is geographically restricted to Naypyitaw Council Region.
- (2) The participants in the study are high school teachers from selected schools during the (2022-2023) academic year.
- (3) This study includes four dimensions (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence).

Definition of Key Terms

- **Professional Development:** Professional development is defined as the process that result in specific changes in the professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs or actions of teachers (Day, 1999).
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Continuous professional development refers to the process of tracking and documenting the skills, knowledge and experience that teachers gain both formally and informally as they work, beyond any initial training, it is a record of their experience, learn and then apply (Allen, 2009).
- **Personal Competence:** Personal competence is identified as important for effective teaching. Primarily an effective teacher should have adequate self-knowledge and needs awareness of feelings, values and attitudes as a teacher (Palmer, 1998).
- **Pedagogical Competence:** Pedagogical competence refers to performance knowledge and skill in teaching and learning (Cooper, 1984).
- **Professional Competence:** Professional competence is defined as the ability or skills to devise and implement learning processes (Saedah & Mohammed, 2012).
- **Social Competence:** Social competence refers to the teacher's ability and skills to interact communicate with the community (Saedah & Mohammed, 2012).

Review of Related Literature

Teacher Professionalism

Teacher professionalism is determined as the competences that meet professional education standards so that a teacher is required to possess a qualified professional background and to obtain the consequences as professionalization principles. These competences include pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence (Saedah & Mohammed, 2012).

The teacher's perception regarding professionalism was dramatically changed to professional development, which means that teachers were required to improve their quality linear to the growth of educational needs. The growth of educational needs requires professionalism development, thus professional teachers indicate the birth of a new era of education (Hargreaves, 2000, as cited in Cipto, Aulia & Sulikah, 2016).

Professional Development in Education

Throughout the world, teacher education programs are designed for providing educators with the certification and competencies required in their professional careers (Rao, 2004, as cited in Dilishad, Hussain & Batool, 2019).

Professional development is necessary for the reformation of the school and to improve the performance of the school. Professional development is a continuous process that empowers the individual teacher. Due to the professional development of the teacher, students' learning outcomes will be improved. It prepares teachers to meet world-class standards (Gray, 2005).

Continuous Professional Development for Teachers

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a long-term process. It plans and organizes systematically to promote the professional development of teachers both individually and collectively to enhance the quality of learning (Ganser, 2000). And, CPD is a process/program that develops the personal qualities among individuals that are necessary to perform their professional and technical roles. It systematically enhances and enlarges the knowledge and skill of the individual throughout the individual's working life. It fulfills the personal as well as professional needs of the individual for effective professional development. The main aim of continuous professional development is to bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students (Guskey, 2002, as cited in Irina, 2017).

Promotions of Teachers' Competences by Continuous Professional Development

Teacher is a professional position where the duties of a teacher must meet the competences which includes pedagogical competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an important part of teacher education and it helps the teachers to keep their professional knowledge and skills updated.

Continuous Professional Development ensures that teachers are part of a skilled and up-to-date profession. It is a continuous process where teachers build on existing knowledge and understanding to access up-to-date knowledge needed to be effective on their job. Guskey (2000) defines CPD as those processes and activities designed to enhance the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they might in turn improve the learning of students.

Previous Related Research

Hursen Cigdem (2012) determined the attitudes of teachers towards professional development activities in Cyprus. The findings indicated that male teachers, the younger teachers and the less the duration of service teachers have more positive attitudes towards the professional development activities. Ansie and Marike (2007) studied on the value of continuous professional

development: teacher perceptions in South Africa. According to the results, most of the teachers agreed that the importance of CPD for personal development and teaching competence.

Method

Research Design and Procedure

This study was a descriptive design to attain the research objectives and it used a survey method by using a questionnaire. This research aimed to study the high school teachers' attitudes towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The literature related to the study was explored through reading related books and, others related research papers about CPD and the competences of teachers.

The questionnaire is concerned with the attitude of high school teachers towards CPD which is mainly expressed the promotions of teachers' competences (personal competences, pedagogical competences, professional competences and social competences) by CPD. Pilot testing was conducted in December 2022 with (28) high school teachers (Senior Assistant Teachers - SAT) from two selected schools B.E.H.S (11), Zabu Thiri township and B.E.H.S (1) Naypyitaw, Zayar Thiri township of Naypyitaw Council Region.

In December 2022 and January 2023, the modified instruments were distributed to all participants of selected 17 schools. After two weeks, all instruments were collected from all participants.

Population and Sample Size

This study was geographically restricted to Naypyitaw Council Region. There are four districts and eight townships in Naypyitaw Council Region. There are 1028 high school teachers for 73 basic education high schools and 58 basic education high schools (branches) in Naypyitaw Council Region. By using a simple random sampling method, two townships were selected from two selected districts. Zabu Thiri Township was selected from Pyinmanar District and Zayar Thiri Township was selected from Zayar Thiri District. Then, from two selected townships, all high school teachers (184 Senior Assistant Teachers - SAT) of all basic education high schools (13 high schools and 4 high school branches – total of 17 schools) participated in this study.

Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire which contains 45 items with four dimensions was used to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards CPD. All items were composed with a five-point Likert scale. The statements of the questionnaire were modified from the literature review to suit the purposes of this study with the advice and guidance of the advisors. See table 1.

Table.1 Dimension, Sub-dimension and Total Item of Questionnaire

| No | Dimension | Sub-dimension | Item | Total |
|----|---|---|------|-------|
| 1 | Personal Competence of the Teachers (Promotions of Knowledge about Continuous Professional Development [CPD] of Teachers) | | 10 | 10 |
| 2 | Pedagogical Competences of the Teachers | Promotions of Teaching Skills of Teachers | 5 | 15 |
| | | Promotions of Classroom Assessment Skills of Teachers | 5 | |
| | | Promotions of Classroom Management Skills of Teachers | 5 | |
| 3 | Professional Competences of the Teachers | Promotions of Knowledge about Learning and Profession of Teachers | 5 | 10 |
| | | Promotions of Subject Matter Skills of Teachers | 5 | |

| No | Dimension | Sub-dimension | Item | Total |
|--------------|--|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| 4 | Social Competence of the Teachers (Improvement of 21 st Century Skills [soft skills] of Teachers) | | 10 | 10 |
| Total | 4 | | 45 | 45 |

To investigate the high school teachers' attitudes towards CPD and the promotions of teachers' competencies by CPD, these 45 items were used. The score indicated the teachers' attitude according to 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The data will be analyzed by using a descriptive statistic (Mean, Standard deviation, percentage) and independent samples '*t*' test to compare the means on age level, total service level and education level. In order to determine the significant differences, the independent samples '*t*' test was used with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 22.0.

Findings

Table 2. Results of the Differences between Teachers' Attitude towards CPD by Age Level (over 40 years and under 40 years)

| Dimension | Group | N | M | SD | MD | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------|----------|-----|-------|------|-------|----------|-----------|--------------|
| PC | over 40 | 79 | 38.89 | 4.04 | -1.93 | -3.31 | 182 | .001** |
| | under 40 | 105 | 40.82 | 3.83 | | | | |
| PD | over 40 | 79 | 59.51 | 6.33 | -3.54 | -4.21 | 182 | .001** |
| | under 40 | 105 | 63.05 | 5.07 | | | | |
| PF | over 40 | 79 | 39.62 | 4.00 | -1.60 | -2.77 | 182 | .006** |
| | under 40 | 105 | 41.22 | 3.78 | | | | |
| SC | over 40 | 79 | 40.56 | 4.02 | -0.74 | -1.06 | 182 | .293 (ns) |
| | under 40 | 105 | 41.30 | 5.16 | | | | |

PC = Personal Competence,

PF = Professional Competence

PD = Pedagogical Competence,

SC = Social Competence

Note. ** $p < .01$, ns = not significant

According to the Table 2, the results showed that the teachers with an age level under 40 years have a more positive attitude than the teachers with an age level over 40 years towards CPD for all dimensions except the fourth-dimension social competence. For the fourth dimension, it was found that there was no significant difference between teachers of over and under 40 years for their attitude. And it was illustrated in Figure 1.

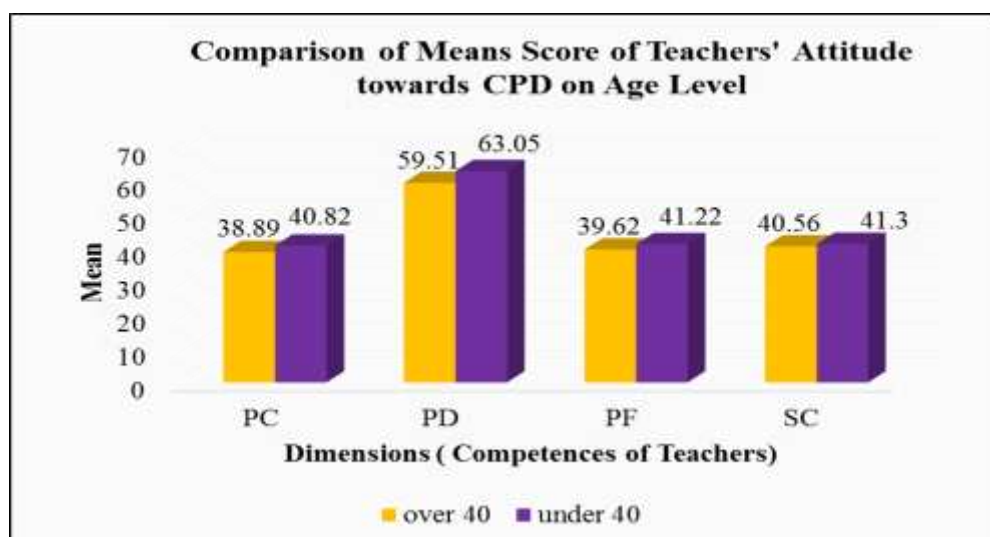


Figure 1 Comparison of Means Score of Teachers' Attitude towards CPD on Age Level

Table 3. Results of the Differences between Teachers' Attitude towards CPD by Total Service Level (over 15 years and under 15 years)

| Dimension | Group | N | M | SD | MD | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------|----------|-----|-------|------|-------|----------|-----------|----------|
| PC | over 15 | 110 | 39.13 | 3.89 | -2.14 | -3.66 | 182 | .000*** |
| | under 15 | 74 | 41.27 | 3.91 | | | | |
| PD | over 15 | 110 | 60.10 | 6.03 | -3.55 | -4.18 | 182 | .000*** |
| | under 15 | 74 | 63.65 | 5.01 | | | | |
| PF | over 15 | 110 | 39.94 | 3.71 | -1.48 | -2.58 | 182 | .012* |
| | under 15 | 74 | 41.42 | 4.13 | | | | |
| SC | over 15 | 110 | 40.27 | 5.27 | -1.76 | -2.52 | 182 | .013* |
| | under 15 | 74 | 42.03 | 3.48 | | | | |

Note. *** $p < .001$, * $p < .05$

According to the Table 3, the results showed that the teachers who have total service under 15 years have a more positive attitude towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD) than the teachers who have total service over 15 years towards CPD for all dimensions. Therefore, it can be interpreted that fewer total service teachers have a willingness to participate in CPD activities actively and are interested in new modern active teaching methods. And it was illustrated in Figure 2.

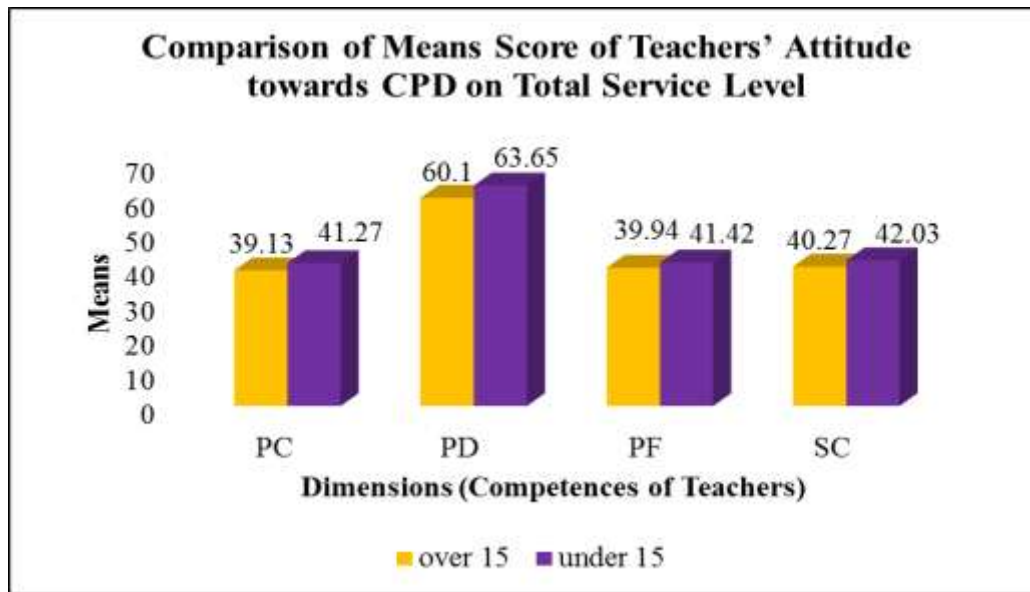


Figure 2 Comparison of Means Score of Teachers' Attitude towards CPD on Total Service Level

Table 4 Results of the Differences between Teachers' Attitude towards CPD by Education Degree (pre-service and in-service)

| Dimension | Group | N | M | SD | MD | <i>t</i> | <i>df</i> | <i>p</i> |
|-----------|-------------|----|-------|------|-------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| PC | pre-service | 87 | 40.37 | 4.06 | 0.72 | 1.21 | 182 | .228 (ns) |
| | in- service | 97 | 39.65 | 3.99 | | | | |
| PD | pre-service | 87 | 62.32 | 5.47 | 1.51 | 1.74 | 182 | .083 (ns) |
| | in- service | 97 | 60.81 | 6.19 | | | | |
| PF | pre-service | 87 | 40.74 | 3.95 | 0.39 | 0.66 | 182 | .510 (ns) |
| | in- service | 97 | 40.35 | 3.95 | | | | |
| SC | pre-service | 87 | 40.82 | 5.38 | -0.30 | -0.44 | 182 | .659 (ns) |
| | in- service | 97 | 41.12 | 4.02 | | | | |

Note. ns = not significant

According to the Table 4, the results showed that the teachers who have an education degree (pre-service) had more positive attitudes towards CPD than the teachers who have an education degree (in-service) for the first three dimensions. But, for the fourth dimension, the teachers who have an education degree (in-service) had more positive attitudes than the teachers who have an education degree (pre-service). According to Probability Value, there were no significant differences between two teacher groups for all dimensions. Therefore, there were no differences in attitude towards CPD. And it was illustrated in Figure 3.

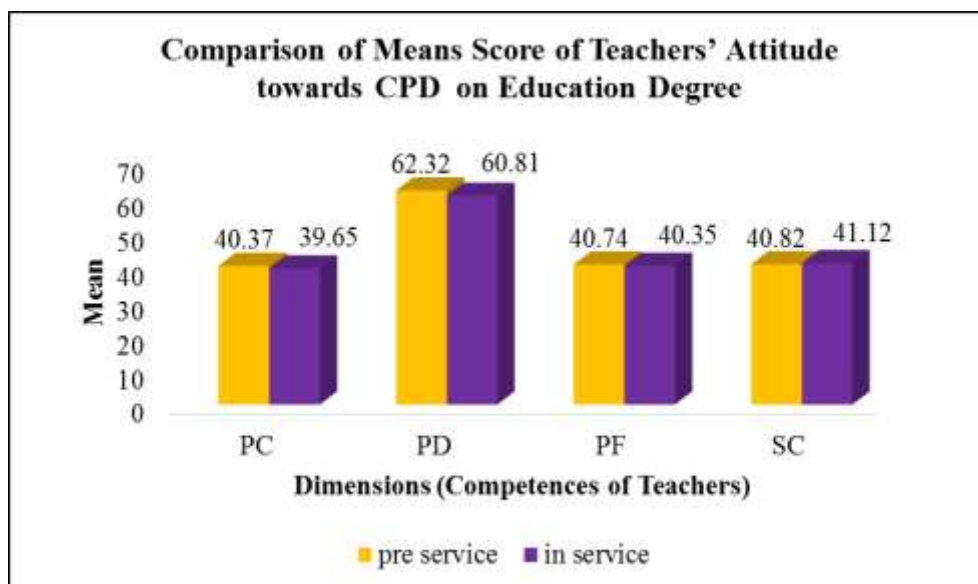


Figure 3 Comparison of Means Score of Teachers' Attitude towards CPD on Education Degree

Table 5. Percentage of Teachers' Attitude towards Competences of Teachers (Promotions of Competences of Teachers by CPD)

| No | Dimension | Strongly Disagreed and Disagreed (%) | Undecided (%) | Agreed and Strongly Agreed (%) |
|----|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Personal Competence | 5.5 | 6.4 | 88.1 |
| 2 | Pedagogical Competence | 4.6 | 4.1 | 91.3 |
| 3 | Professional Competence | 5.8 | 3.9 | 90.3 |
| 4 | Social Competence | 2.6 | 4.1 | 93.3 |
| | Average | 4.6 | 4.6 | 90.8 |

Table 5 shows the percentage of teachers' attitude towards competences of teachers. A total of 184 high school teachers participated in it. The collected data for teachers' attitude towards CPD according to four dimensions are illustrated in following Figure 4.

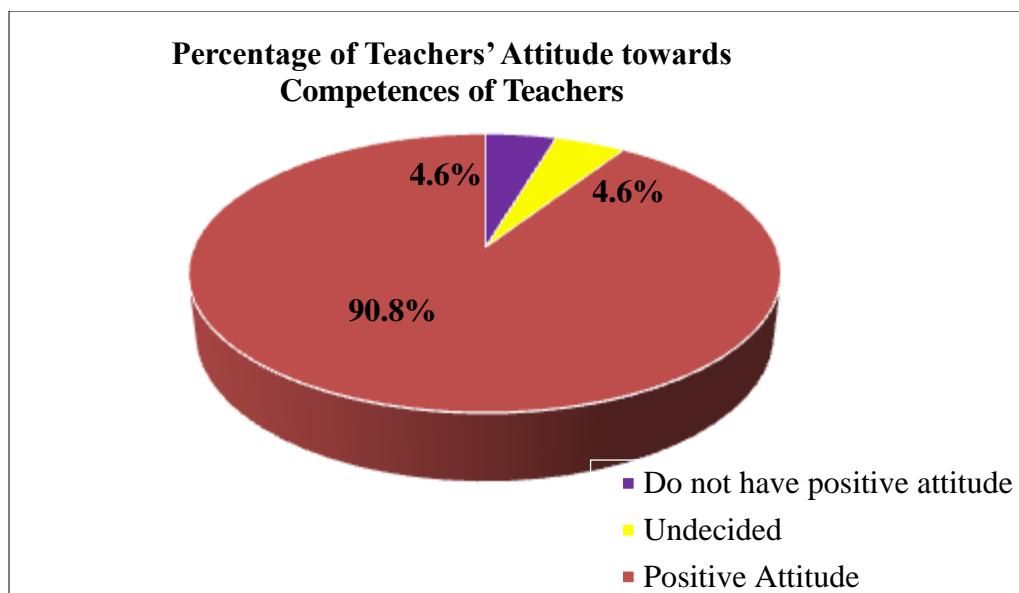


Figure 4 Percentage of Teachers' Attitude towards Competences of Teachers

According to the above results, it can be interpreted that 90.8% of participants (high school teachers) have a positive attitude, 4.6% of teachers have undecided and 4.6 % of teachers do not have a positive attitude towards promotions of the competencies of teachers by CPD.

Therefore, according to this study, it can be interpreted that most of the teachers are interested in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and have positive attitudes towards CPD.

Discussion

Firstly, the results of this research were demonstrated to compare teachers' attitudes towards CPD among three kinds of groups. According to the means value of all groups, almost all teachers have a high positive attitude towards CPD for all dimensions. Moreover, according to the means differences (MD) of these groups, there are no significant differences for all dimensions. And the outcomes showed that younger, less service and education degree (pre-service) teachers have more positive attitudes than older, more service and education degree (in-service) teachers towards CPD for three dimensions, personal competence, pedagogical competence and professional competence. But for the fourth dimension (social competence), the teachers who got an education degree (in-service) have a little more positive attitude than the teachers who got an education degree (pre-service). But the mean difference was very small.

Secondly, according to this study, 88.1% of teachers agreed that their personal competence (knowledge about CPD) was promoted, and 91.3% of teachers agreed that their pedagogical competence (teaching skills, classroom assessment and management skills) were promoted, 90.3% of teachers agreed that their professional competence (knowledge about learning and profession, and subject matter skills) were promoted and 93.3% of teachers agreed that their social competence (21st century skills and soft skills) was promoted by CPD.

Thirdly, according to the research findings, all of the most of the teachers have positive attitude towards CPD. According to the results of the five-point Likert scale questionnaire, 90.8% of participants (high school teachers) agreed that they were promoted in their level of all four dimensions of competences of teacher by CPD. But 4.6% of participants did not agree for the promotions of their teacher competences by CPD. It may be due to the fact that they did not participate CPD activities in their schools and they did not understand the concept of CPD. Other 4.6% of teachers could not decide, agree or disagree with the statements of a questionnaire. It may

be because they did not understand the concept of CPD and they were not interested in CPD activities in their schools.

Suggestions

According to the results, to become more effective, some following suggestions can be provided for subject teachers, school head teachers and administrators.

- Every teacher should learn to know more about Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and should participate in CPD activities actively and effectively.
- The teachers should promote their teacher competencies (personal, pedagogical, professional and social) by CPD.
- Today teachers need to equip themselves with new technological skills and competences to perform effectively for future professionals.
- Every head teacher (Principals) should give clear instructions to the teachers.
- Every head teacher does the monitoring on the implementation of CPD activities and support the needed things (teaching aids, reference books).
- CPD should be implemented at every school to promote the competencies of teachers.
- CPD should implement according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Education.
- Education administrators, Township/ District/ State and Region Monitoring and Evaluating members should support the technique and more suitable things for CPD activities to teachers and school head teachers.
- The Ministry of Education should revise the framework of CPD and re-prepare to include all competencies of teachers to be more effective.
- And, Ministry of Education maintain a system that clearly depicts the duties and responsibilities of each stakeholder to provide practical training on CPD, support, follow-up and feedback on teachers' and schools' CPD activities.

Recommendations

According to this study, CPD has key role in improving teachers' teaching competences and their students' learning and achievement. And the results of this study recommended that the teachers have the willingness to continue their CPD to promote their competences (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence) of teachers. And these recommendations are also for head teachers and other stakeholders from Ministry of Education.

- (1) Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can promote the competences of teachers and the teachers can become effective teachers.
- (2) Because of the development of teachers' teaching learning skills, subject matter skills, classroom assessment and management skills and communication skills, creative thinking and collaboration skills, the students' learning achievement will be promoted.
- (3) By encouraging the teachers to have more positive attitudes towards CPD, they can participate actively in CPD activities.
- (4) Further researches need to be performed in other states and regions.
- (5) It is needed to take the future researches at all levels such as primary and middle school level.

- (6) Ministry of Education need to recruit for more effective CPD activities to meet the present demands of teachers.

Conclusion

According to the research findings, all of the most of the teachers have positive attitudes towards Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for all dimensions. Most of the teachers were interested in CPD and they participate in CPD activities. They agreed that their competences (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence) were promoted by CPD.

The four characteristics have been chosen as the distinguishing features of professions; (1) expertise, (2) autonomy, (3) commitment, and (4) responsibility (Dr. Kornhauser, 1962, as cited in Khin Zaw, 2001). And in modern societies, the professional person requires the repeated hurdling of countless obstacles. So, it is needed to have professional expertise for teachers to face the challenges of their teaching-learning societies. Professional expertise is based on the belief that the performance of a vital function in society requires specialized knowledge and skills. CPD can promote the teachers' expertise, required knowledge and skills of the teachers for their teaching-learning societies.

Moreover, competent teachers understand the situations of controversial overtones in education and know how to solve them effectively. And, the competent teacher not only establish beneficial student-teacher relationships and student-subject relationships but also help for the student-society relationships. Therefore, it is needed for all teachers to promote the competences (personal competence, pedagogical competence, professional competence and social competence) of teachers. Every teacher of every school, therefore, should participate in CPD activities because Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can promote competences of teachers in education.

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