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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS IN EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BASIC SCHOOLS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF GHANA

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Abstract

The main purpose of the study was to find out the professional development needs of teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors (CS) in the Basic Schools in the Central Region of Ghana. The study employed the descriptive survey design. The simple random sampling technique was used to sample 209 teachers whilst the purposive sampling technique was also used to sample 29 head teachers and 11 CS for the study. A self-designed questionnaire with reliability co-efficient of 0.87 was used to collect data from the respondents. Data collected from the respondents was analysed into frequency counts and percentages. The study established that the teachers, head teachers, and CS across both geographical locations of the study participate in staff development programmes. Nevertheless, the respondents in urban schools experience more participation than their colleagues in rural-urban schools. It was further revealed that the professional development needs of teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors (CS) varies across the two sites of the study. The study, therefore, recommended that the types of professional development

programmes should be tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders in education (i.e. teachers, head teachers, and circuit supervisors).

Keywords

Urban, Rural, Professional Development, Programmes, Stakeholders

1. Introduction

Without effective preparation programmes and ongoing professional development, educators cannot reasonably be expected to provide the quality education and care that is needed to address the achievement gap and create pathways to success for children (Caparotta, 2012). In addition, properly utilised professional development can make influential difference for teachers. Caparotta further intimates that even though it is an obligation for teachers and other service providers in the school to participate in professional development programmes as employment prerequisites, their mere participation in these activities does not ensure improved educational experience for the students.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2009) defined professional development as “activities that develop an individual’s skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher” (p. 49). Evidently, professional development is a process that includes training, practice and feedback and provides adequate time and follow-up support. In view of this, Smith and Gillespie (2007) and Dampson, Antor, & Eshun, (2018) maintain that professional development occurs when the beliefs and assumption about the profession change which further result in changes in professional practices. Professional development can be made available for teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors through courses, workshops or formal qualification programmes, collaboration between schools or among teachers of the same school (Dampson, Antor, & Eshun, 2018; OECD, 2009). In furtherance, professional development occurs through coaching/mentoring, collaborative planning and teaching, and the sharing of good practices. The professional development of teachers and other stakeholders in education is important because it provides the opportunity for these stakeholders to update their knowledge, skills, attitudes and approaches with respect to the implementation of a particular curriculum. Educators may further apply changes to the curriculum and other teaching practices in the school as a direct result of their engagement in professional development programmes.

Despite the benefits associated with professional development for teachers and other stakeholders in the school, extant literature suggests that the need for professional development varies from one nation to another. For instance, In Europe the OECD (2009)

reports that educators in Bulgaria, Denmark and Lithuania need content, subject field and performance standards whilst educators in Austria, Hungary, Iceland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia need professional development in student discipline and behaviour problems. Further, Sagir's (2014) study found that the teachers needed professional development in extracurricular and classroom activities, instructional programmes and evaluation, teacher-student relationships and organisation of instructional environments.

In Malaysia, Hussin and Al-Albri (2015) established that the school principals needed professional development in setting goals and determining outcomes, designing, implementing and evaluating curriculum, building teacher professionalism and instructional skills, problem solving, understanding evaluation of school performance and understanding students' development and learning. Other areas that the school principals needed professional development were building shared decision making, research knowledge skills, ICT utilisation, defining the core values and beliefs of education, creating a learning organisation, communicating effectively, building team commitment, team working skills and resolving conflicts (building consensus and negotiating leadership capacity).

The situation in Europe is not substantially different from Africa. For example, in Kenya, Chepkole, Koross and Kiptoo-Tarus (2017) from their study of Heads of Department (HOD) that the HODs needed professional development in curriculum implementation, supervision, teaching methods and evaluation of learners. The various studies cited so far point to the fact that students' performance keeps declining as a result of the lack of professional development programmes that meet the needs of the educators. In Ghana, the situation is not different. A study by Essel, Badu, Owusu-Boateng and Saah (2009) revealed that more than 60% of teachers in Ghana are in favour of getting professional development in certain areas of their professional career. These areas include teaching methodology, institutional skills, management and leadership skills, information communication technology, research and publication, and mentoring and supervision (Odoom, Opoku & Ntiakoh-Ayipah, 2016).

In addition, studies (Akyeampong & Lewin, 2002; Osei, 2006) have established that the poor academic performance of basic school students in the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) is attributable to the poor instructional supervision that is carried out by head teachers and Circuit Supervisors as a result of lack of skills in instructional supervision. However, Kumbe and Chumombo (as cited in Cobbold and Dare, 2011) maintained that apart from professional development programmes being ad hoc and poorly, with erratic power supply and irregular funding, there is also the problem of tailoring the professional

development programmes to meet the specific needs of the classroom teachers and other stakeholders in education. From this, it is evident that both the teachers, head teachers and the Circuit Supervisors need professional development programmes that have been designed to meet their specific needs and interest. It, however, appears that little or no empirical studies have been conducted to find out the professional development needs of educators in the Central Region of Ghana. Besides, it also appears that studies (Dampson, Antor, & Eshun, 2018, Essel, Badu, Owusu-Boateng & Saah, 2009, Cobbold & Dare, 2011 Odoom, Opoku & Ntiakoh-Ayipah, 2016) that have been conducted in Ghana focused extensively on teachers. In view of this, the current study sought to find out the professional needs of teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors in the Central Region of Ghana. To do this, the views of teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors were compared using the Cape Coast and Mfansteman as the research sites. The study, therefore, sought to find an answer to the following research question:

1. How does the professional development needs of Basic school teachers in rural areas in the Central region differ from their counterparts in the urban settings?

2. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design. This design was considered the most appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe the professional developmental needs of stakeholders in education without necessarily manipulating variables. The simple random sampling technique was used to sample 209 teachers whilst the purposive sampling technique was also used to sample 29 head teachers and 11 circuit supervisors for the study. Out of the 209 teachers, 114 and 95 were sampled from Site 1 and Site 2 respectively. For both the Head teachers and the Circuit Supervisors, 5 and 6 each were sampled from Site 1 and Site 2 respectively. A pre-validated questionnaire designed by Dampson (2015) was adapted for the study. Consequently, 20 copies of the instrument were pre-tested in schools outside the study area. A Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .87 was obtained from the pre-tested data. Data collected from the respondents was analysed using frequency counts and percentages to help show the direction of the responses.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section deals with the demographic characteristics of the stakeholders who participated in the study. The demographic characteristics which were considered in the study

included gender, age, academic qualification and years of service. These characteristics and their frequency counts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Subscale	Teachers (%)	Head Teachers (%)	Circuit Supervisors (%)
Gender	Male	96(46.0)	10(38.0)	7(64.0)
	Female	112(54.0)	16(62.0)	4(36.0)
Age	18-24	11(5.0)	-	
	25-29	42(20.0)	1(4.0)	
	30-39	111(53.0)	2(8.0)	1(9.0)
	40-49	31(15.0)	9(36.0)	4(36.0)
	50-60	15(9.0)	13(52.0)	6(55.0)
Qualification	Master's	7(3)	3(12.0)	5(45.0)
	Degree	117(56.0)	19(73.0)	5(45.0)
	Diploma	68(33.0)	1(3.0)	1(9.0)
	WASSCE/SSCE	16(7.0)	3(12.0)	-
Years of Service	1-5yrs	57(28.0)	17(71.0)	6(55.0)
	6-10yrs	54(26.0)	-	4(36.0)
	11-15yrs	60(30.0)	5(21.0)	1(9.0)
	16-20yrs	14(17.0)	-	-
	21+yrs	18(9.0)	2(8.0)	-

Source: Field Data, Dampson 2015

Table 1 presented the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The Table shows that majority (54.0%) of the respondents were females whilst 54(46.0%) were males. This means that majority of the teachers who participated in the study

were females. With regard to the head teachers, it is evident from the Table that 16(62.0%) were females whilst 10(38.0%) were males. Regarding the circuit supervisors, 7(64.0%) were males whilst 4(36.0%) were females. The relatively large number of female respondents in the study challenges the general assumption that the Ghanaian educational system employs more males than females (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). On the age range of the teachers, majority (53.0%) were between 30-39 years whilst a few 11(5.0%) were between 18-24 years. On the part of the head teachers, majority (52.0%) were between 50-60 years whilst only 1(4.0%) of the head teachers was between 25-29 years. With regard the circuit supervisors, 6(55.0%) were between 50-60 years whilst 1(9.0%) was between 30-30 years. The ages of the respondents presuppose that they are heterogeneous. This means that in planning the development needs of such groups, their needs should be given critical consideration to ensure the programmes match the needs of the groups.

Regarding the academic qualification of the respondents, the study revealed that majority (56.0%) of the teachers held Bachelor's degrees whilst a few (3.0%) held their Master's. Evidently, there are still some untrained teachers in some of the basic schools in the study area despite the quest of the government to reduce the number of untrained teachers in the basic schools. On the part of the head teachers, 19(73.0%) whilst only 1(12.0%) possessed Diploma certificate. The results suggest that head teachers in the rural-urban schools are appointed based on the number of years they have been in the teaching profession and not their academic qualification (Oduro, 2003; Affull-Broni & Dampson, 2008; Esia-Donkoh, 2014). These head teachers are likely to lead their schools through the experiences from their past and trial-and-error approach. With regard the circuit supervisors, 10(90.0%) had either Master's or Bachelor's Degree whilst 1(9.0%) had a Diploma.

On the years of service of the respondents, the teachers' data showed that majority (30.0%) have served for 11-15 years whilst a few (17.0%) have served for 16-20 years. The teachers are likely to become accustomed to the culture and traditions of these schools (Dampson, 2015). As a result, their conservative dispositions would affect the extent to which these teachers embrace changes in the status quo. This situation may affect innovative school practices such as delegation and decision-making. The data further revealed that majority (71.0%) of the head teachers have remained in the service for 1-5 years whilst 2(8.0%) have served for either 21 years or above. These findings are consistent with the findings of Baffour-Awuah's study (2011) that majority of head teachers in public basic school in Ghana retire or attrite from their positions after 5 years of service as school heads. On the part of the Circuit Supervisors, the data indicates that 6(55.0%) have spent 1-5 years whilst 1(9.0%) has

served for 11-15 years. This also presupposes that as far as the Circuit Supervisors are concerned, they do not remain on the field for a very long period.

3.2 Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Teachers in Rural and Urban Areas

The intent of the first research objective was to establish the training programmes undertaken by teachers in rural areas on the job over a year. The views of the teachers in response to the six items that sought their views about their participation in staff developments are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Teachers

I have attended/participated in	Teachers (site 1)			Teachers (site 2)		
	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Courses/workshops on good classroom practices	85 (75)	6 (5)	20 (18)	71 (75)	3 (3)	15 (16)
In-service training on new educational syllabus/ school leadership and management	94 (83)	2 (2)	17 (15)	57 (60)	3 (3)	30 (32)
Degree course/ certificate in education	98 (86)	5 (4)	9 (8)	60 (63)	9 (9)	20 (21)
Educational research issues	67 (59)	10 (9)	35 (31)	41 (43)	12 (13)	37 (39)
In-service/workshop on teaching and learning methods	102 (90)	4 (4)	7 (6)	80 (84)	1 (1)	9 (10)
Network of teachers formed specifically for the professional dept. of teachers	40 (35)	21(18)	50 (44)	27 (29)	12 (13)	50 (53)

Source: (Dampson 2015) Site 1: n= 114 Site 2: n= 95

As evident from the Table, teachers across both sites broadly agreed that they participate in staff development programmes although some of the teachers have never participated in some of the development programmes. For instance, 31% (Site 1) and 39% (Site 2) of the teachers revealed that they had never participated in educational research. The

results further reveal that 44% (Site 1) and 53% (Site 2) of the teachers have never participated in networking of teachers although teachers in Site 1 seem to have participated in development programmes more than their colleagues in Site 2.

Generally, the results indicate clearly that teacher participation in development programmes is at the desired level. Disparities, however, exist in the type of development programmes provided for basic school teachers. There is a seeming impression that teachers often participate in ‘one size fits all’ programmes. These programmes, therefore, do not satisfy the professional needs of the teachers (Dampson, 2015). It is, therefore, incumbent on the part of educational authorities to restructure these professional needs to suit the needs and interest as well as the aspirations of the teachers. Evidence of the professional needs of the teachers is presented in Figure 1.

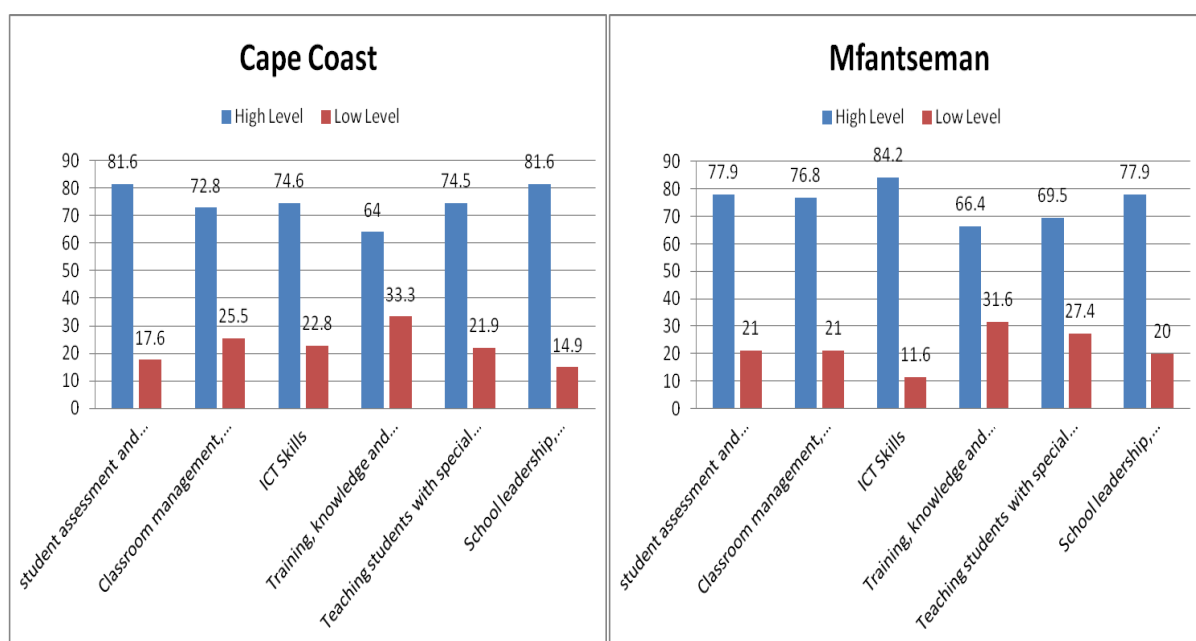


Figure 1: Professional Development Needs of Teachers

As evident from Figure 1, the teachers were expected to rate the developmental needs on a four-point Likert-scale that ranged from “high level of need” “moderate level of need” “low level of need” and “no level of need”. Essentially, the responses provided by the teachers were merged to form high level of need and low level of need. With the exception of ICT skills where there were marked differences across the two sites, there were almost responses with regard to professional development needs of the teachers across the two study sites. Regarding ICT skills, 84% of the teachers in Site 2 showed a high level of need compared to 75% of the teachers in Site 1. Interestingly, majority (70%-80%) of the teachers in both sites showed high level of need for all the programmes with the exception of training, knowledge and understanding in their subject area where there were reductions in the

percentages. It is also observable from Figure 1 that there is a high level of need in the areas of training in school leadership and organising workshops. The teachers were, however, confident in their subject areas. According to Burns (2015), the mismatch between the professional development programmes and the needs of the teachers result from difficult working conditions, systematic challenges. As have been demonstrated in this study, the professional development that exists for teachers, especially, in rural areas is episodic rather than sustained and intensive. It often reflects budget constraints, the lack of qualified facilitators, volatility, and logistical challenges (Cobbold & Dare, 2011; Burns, 2015). Therefore, teacher participation in development programmes may either be fragmented or not consider the skill set of the teachers.

3.3 Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Head Teachers in Rural and Urban Areas

The focus of this objective was to determine the differences in head teachers' developmental programmes based on geographic location. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Head teachers*

I have attended/participated in	head teacher (site 1)			head teacher (site 2)		
	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Courses/workshops in need assessment for teachers	11 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	12 (80)	2 (13)	1 (7)
In-service training in school leadership administration and management	11 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	14 (93)	- (-)	1 (7)
Degree course/ certificate in education	11 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	13 (87)	- (-)	2 (13)
Financial and human Resource issues	8 (73)	1 (9)	2 (18)	12 (80)	- (-)	3 (20)

In-service/workshop in supervisory and report writing skills	10 (91)	- (-)	1 (9)	11 (79)	2 (13)	2 (13)
Network of teachers formed specifically for the professional dpt of teachers	6 (55)	1(9)	3 (27)	8 (53)	2 (13)	5 (33)

Site 1: n= 5 Site 2: n=6

It can be inferred from the results in Table 3 that all the head teachers irrespective their geographical locations have had the opportunity to participate in professional development programmes. Results presented in Table 3, however, indicate that differences existed in the professional development programmes head teachers undertake based on their geographical location. For instance, differences were shown in workshop attendance, Site 1 (100%), Site 2 (80%); supervision and writing of report, Site 1 (91%), Site 2 (79%) and educational upgrading, Site 1 (100%), Site 2 (87%). Comparatively, head teachers from the urban schools (Site 1) seem to have had more professional development opportunities than their colleagues in the rural-urban schools (Site 2). According to Damspson (2015), head teachers in urban schools in Ghana constantly receive training from Non-governmental Organisations such as the United States Agency for International Development and the Leadership for Learning Programme (LfL). The trainings provided by these institutions seem to have impacted positively on the professional development of the head teachers (Jull et al., 2012). Figure 2 presents the professional development needs of the Head Teachers.

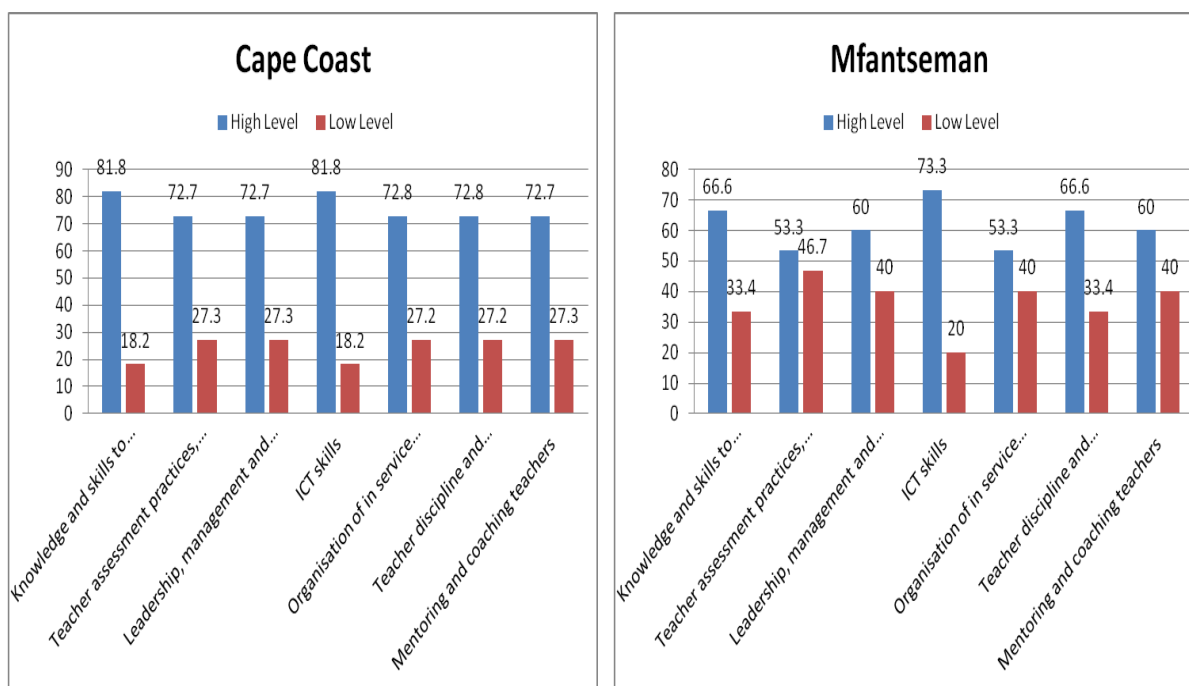


Figure 2: Professional Development Needs of Head Teachers

It is evident from Figure 2 that head teachers from urban schools (Site 1) have higher professional needs than head teachers from rural-urban schools (Site 2). This is because the demands of the headship position in the urban settings might be greater than that of their colleagues in the rural areas. Again, expectations from stakeholders in education such as parents may further overburden the head teachers in their profession. According to Dampson (2015), head teachers in rural settings also experience similar challenges. They are, however, often left unsupported once they are offered a headship appointment (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Baffour-Awuah, 2011). Unsurprisingly, it often takes the effort of the head teachers to gain awareness and understanding of their tasks as head teachers when they are newly appointed. It is, therefore, expected that head teachers in both rural and urban areas get the needed professional support in order to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the various stakeholders. This is because their role in the provision and implementation of quality education is crucial.

3.4 Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Circuit Supervisors’ in Rural and Urban Areas

The role of Circuit Supervisors in the implementation of basic education in Ghana cannot be overemphasized. It is in this light that the current study sought to unravel the professional development programmes they undertaken to boost their professional experiences. The results in Table 3 indicates that all (100.0%) of the CS in Site 2 engaged in networking whilst 80% of the CS in Site 1 networked. The Table further reveals that all the CSs’ from the two sites have received various in-service training and workshops in school monitoring, supervision, leadership, administration and management. Additionally, almost all

the CS's have received training on workshop organisation. They have also participated in professional networks formed specifically for the professional development of circuit supervisors. The results in Table 3 mean that for one to work effectively as a CS, a bachelor's degree or above is not enough. He or she further needs training in the area of monitoring and supervision. It, therefore, befalls on teacher training institutions in Ghana to ensure that enough opportunities are provided for people to be trained as professionals to supervise teaching in the circuits.

Table 5: Professional Development Programmes undertaken by Circuit Supervisors

I have attended/participated in	Circuit Supervisor (site 1)			Circuit Supervisor (site 2)		
	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Courses/workshops in School Monitoring and Supervision	5 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)
In-service training in school leadership administration and management	5 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)
Degree course / certificate in education	5 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)
Educational Research issues	5 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)
Report writing skills organisation of INSERT	5 (100)	- (-)	- (-)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)
Network of teachers formed specifically for the professional dpt. of Circuit supervisors	4 (80)	- (-)	1 (20)	6 (100)	- (-)	- (-)

It must however be noted that staff development among CS's from the two study sites showed almost no varied difference in location. Figure 3 shows the professional development needs of the Circuit Supervisor's.

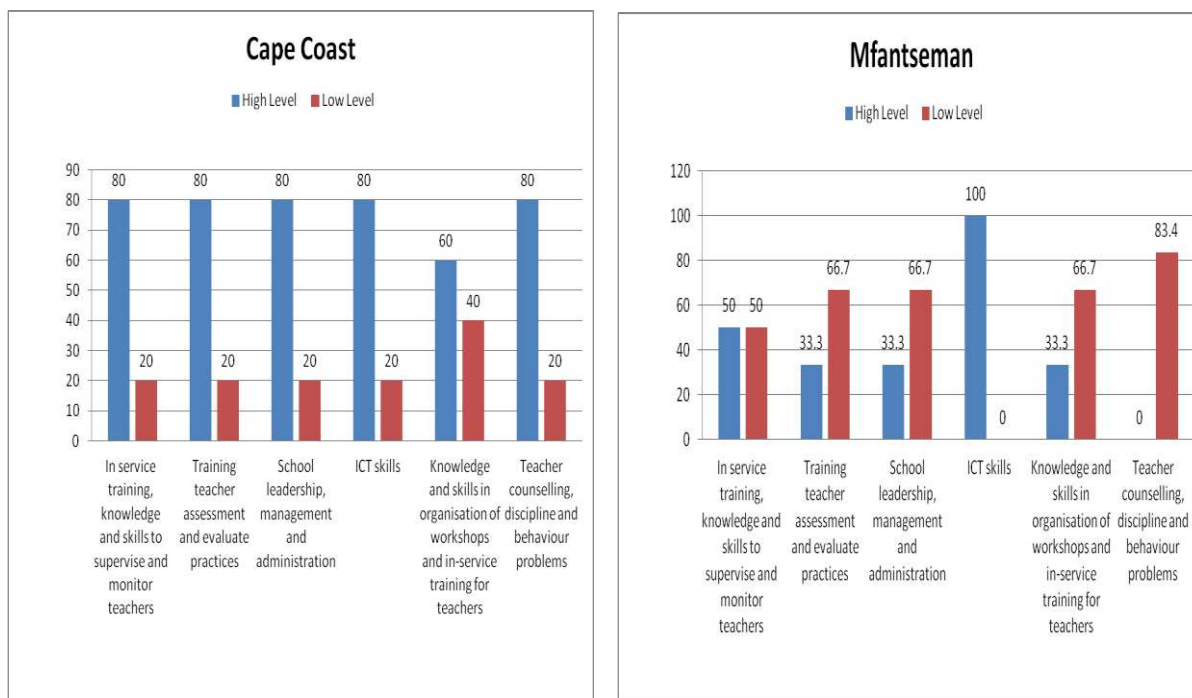


Figure 3: Professional Development Needs of Circuit Supervisors

It can be observed from Figure 3 that majority (80%) of the CS's from Site 1 viewed in-service training, knowledge and skills to supervise and monitor, teacher assessment and evaluative practices, school leadership, management and administration, and teacher counselling, discipline and behaviour problems as a high level of need whilst 67% of the CS's from Site 2 mentioned in-service training, school leadership and knowledge and skills to supervise and monitor as low level of need. ICT skills was, however, considered a high-level need for both circuit supervisors from Site 1 and 2. The demographic characteristics of the teachers might explain the differences in the needs of the CS from Site 1 and 2 as those in Site 2 seem to have gained more experience on the field than their counterparts in Site 1. As indicated in Table 3, 17% of the CS from Site 2 have spent between 11-15 years with none from Site 1.

4. Conclusions

The study has established two significant findings. First, the study has shown that the teachers, head teachers, and circuit supervisors across both geographical locations of the study participate in staff development programmes. Nevertheless, the respondents in urban schools experience more participation than their colleagues in rural-urban schools. Second, it has been revealed that the professional development needs of teachers, head teachers and Circuit Supervisors (CS) varies across the two sites of the study. The findings therefore, implies that stakeholders (teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors) in the urban

schools will be more abreast with recent advances in their profession inasmuch as they experience more participation in the professional development programmes than their colleagues in rural-urban schools. In the light of these findings, it is recommended that the types of professional development programmes should be tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders in education (i.e. teachers, head teachers, and circuit supervisors). This will facilitate the implementation of educational policies insofar as the satisfaction of the needs of stakeholders serve a source of motivation. Again, the professional development programmes should be structured to meet demands of the areas of the stakeholders. This will help stakeholders to update their knowledge, skills and techniques of their profession.

The major limitations of this study have to do with the generalisability of the findings and the methods employed in the collection and analysis of the data. The study focused on teachers, head teachers and circuit supervisors in the basic schools in the Central Region of Ghana. As such, the findings could not be generalised to other levels of education as well as other regions in Ghana. In addition, the study employed only quantitative tools in the collection and analysis of the data. The results would, however, have been more in-depth if the study had employed both quantitative and qualitative tools. In view of these limitations, it is suggested that further studies should employ the mixed method approach. In addition, it would be prudent to expand the study area to cover all the regions in Ghana so that the results could reflect the phenomenon from the Ghanaian perspective.

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