Rural Teachers’ Perspectives on Continuous Professional Development

ABSTRACT

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| **Aims:** In recent years continuous professional development (CPD) has attracted keen interest in academic and policy circles across the globe and this attention shows no sign of waning soon. Studies on CPD exit, covering several strands. However, conspicuously missing are studies that shed light on the perspectives of rural teachers regarding continuous professional development. This study aimed to bridge this gap by unveiling the perspectives of rural teachers on continuous professional development.  **Methodology:** Employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, the study recruited 270 participants for the quantitative phase and 15 purposively selected participants for the qualitative phase.  **Results:** The findings revealed that rural teachers perceived CPD as having significant impact on their professional practice. it increased their motivation to teach by enhancing their competencies, improving ability to teach, equipping them with emerging teaching skills and assisting them to resolve classroom challenges. However, the study also discovered CPD programmes available to rural teachers were inadequate and did not sufficiently develop them into subject matter experts. Additionally, participants concur that CPD should be designed following a thorough CPD need assessment. Finaly, CPD was seen as providing rural teachers with valuable opportunities such as platform to meet and interact with subject experts and colleagues.  **Conclusion:** This study recommends that CPD programmes for rural teachers should focus on subject specific areas and be informed by a CPD needs assessment o ensure their effectiveness. |

***Keywords:***Continuing professional development, Teachers, Rural areas, ability to teach

1. INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has emerged as a critical area of focus in educational research (Abakah, Addea, & Amuzu, 2023; Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Bland, 2020; Elliot & Campbell, 2015; Gómez et al., 2019; King, 2014; Kuneta, 2012; Tang & Choi, 2009; Salifu, Agyekum, & Nketia, 2024). This growing emphasis on CPD is largely driven by rapid technological advancements, increasing educational standards, and the evolution of knowledge economy, all of which necessitate continuous learning among teachers to remain relevant in their profession. As Abakah et al. (2023) assert, “it has become critical for teachers to engage in continuous learning activities in order to execute their duties effectively in modern-day classrooms or risk becoming obsolete.” Consequently, CPD is widely regarded as a capacity-building mechanism that enables educators to acquire contemporary pedagogical skills and teaching methodologies, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom (National Teaching Standards-NTC, 2022).

In its broadest sense, CPD encompasses all activities undertaken by teachers while in active service to enhance their professional competence and instructional effectiveness (Oswald, Sherratt, & Smith, 2014). It plays a crucial role in improving teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and overall classroom performance (Pedder & Opfer, 2011). As professionals, teachers are expected to take ownership of their professional growth, adapting to changes and refining their instructional strategies to better cater to the needs of their students (Michael & Wasten, 2015). The significance of CPD in education is well documented. Borg (2015) argues that engaging in CPD is one of the most influential factors in improving educational quality. Effective CPD programs empower teachers with autonomy in decision-making, the ability to address pedagogical challenges, and enhanced instructional expertise that positively impacts student learning (Banks & Smyth, 2011; Shrik i & Patkin, 2016). According to Wiliam and Thompson (2017), students taught by teachers actively participating in CPD programs are more likely to achieve better learning outcomes than those whose teachers lack such opportunities.

Despite its clear benefits, CPD remains a significant challenge in developing countries (Abakah et al., 2023; Gendenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015; Mufti, 2024). In Ghana, financial constraints and limited budgetary allocations have been identified as major obstacles to the provision of CPD opportunities for teachers. The situation is even more pronounced in rural areas, where poor infrastructure and inadequate amenities further discourage teacher participation in CPD activities (Abakah et al., 2023; UNICEF Ghana, 2022; Şahin, Soylu & Jafari, 2024).

While global studies on CPD are extensive (Awodiji & Naicker, 2023; Hennessy et al., 2022; Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010; Nyaaba & Zhai, 2024; Murray, 2021; Nakidien, Sayed, & Sadeck, 2022), research on CPD in underscoring rural perspectives is nascent (Pettersson & Ström, 2019; Quinn, et al., 2020; Şahin, Soylu & Jafari, 2024; Soekamto et al., 2022) Likewise, literature on CPD in Ghana is steadily expanding (Abakah, 2019, 2022; Abakah et al., 2023; Adangabe & Boateng, 2022; Mensah, 2016; Kwakye, 2023; Njenga, 2023). However, limited scholarly attention has been given to the perspectives of teachers in rural areas. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the CPD experiences of rural teachers in the Tolon District of Ghana. Specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the perspectives of rural teachers on CPD? 2) What needs should inform the development of CPD for rural teachers? 3) What CPD opportunities are accessible to teachers in rural areas?

Aside the introduction, the paper is structured as follows: Section two provides a review of relevant literature on CPD. Section three outlines the methodology adopted for the study. While section four presents and discusses the research findings, section five concludes the study with key insights and recommendations.

**2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1 Conceptualization of Continuous Professional Development**

Although CPD has gained significant attention in recent years, it is not a new concept (Li & Dervin, 2018). Models of CPD date back to the late 1960s and 1970s, when structured frameworks for teacher development began to emerge (Day & Sachs, 2005). In the literature, a wide range of terms and phrases are used interchangeably to describe CPD. These include in-service training, staff development, teacher professional development training, teacher professional competence development, and advanced training for teachers (Li & Dervin, 2018, p. 29). Likewise, the definition of CPD varies depending on its form and context. According to Asfors (2012), CPD is often referred to as post-initial teacher education, emphasizing its role beyond the foundational training of teachers. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD, (2009) defines CPD as any activity that enhances a teacher’s skills, knowledge, expertise, and other professional attributes.

In Ghana, the National Teaching Council (NTC, 2022) conceptualizes CPD as: “A systematic and sustained process by which a teacher not only maintains but also improves and expands their professional knowledge, values, and skills” (NTC, 2022, p. 8). This definition highlights the continuous nature of CPD and its role in enhancing professional standards, ultimately contributing to improved teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

**2.2 Continuous Professional Development: A Global Perspective**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognized and takes on various forms across the globe (Allison, 2014; Avalos, 2011; Jovanova-Mitkovska, 2010; Li & Dervin, 2018; Enser & Enser, 2021). CPD encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, ranging from self-directed learning and in-service training to externally organized professional development programs (Day & Sachs, 2004). These activities can take place within a country or internationally, depending on the nature and objectives of the training (OECD, 2014).

The scope of CPD is extensive, covering multiple formats such as seminars, conferences, workshops, formal courses, online training, and structured mentoring or supervision. Additionally, CPD initiatives may include qualification programs, participation in professional learning networks, observation visits to other schools, collaborative research, and peer mentoring or observation. Guiden and Brennan (2017) categorize CPD into three main types: compulsory training, voluntary training, and informal training, with the classification often varying across different national education systems. For instance, in most OECD countries, CPD participation remains voluntary, whereas in Finland, teacher participation has transitioned from voluntary to compulsory (Li & Dervin, 2018).

Despite the diversity in CPD programs, they are typically delivered through three primary strategies: school-based CPD, partnership-based CPD, and network-based CPD.

1. School-Based CPD: This approach focuses on enhancing the professional growth of teachers within their own school environment. It aligns CPD initiatives with the specific needs, goals, and resources of individual schools, fostering targeted skill development among educators (Nyaaba & Zhai, 2024).

2. Partnership-Based CPD: This strategy involves collaboration between schools and higher education institutions or specialized training organizations. Through formal agreements, teachers receive professional training from external institutions. Effective partnerships are built on mutual needs and reciprocity, ensuring both parties benefit from the exchange of expertise and resources.

3. Network-Based CPD: This model promotes professional development through collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and peer support among schools, educators, or organizations. By leveraging the collective expertise and experiences of a broader network, CPD programs can more effectively address common educational challenges and goal

**2.3 The Evolving Role of CPD in Teacher Professionalism and Educational Reform**

Historically, professional development was the sole responsibility of teachers, who had to actively pursue learning opportunities or risk professional stagnation (Abakah, 2023). However, with rapid technological advancements, shifting economic conditions, the pursuit of higher educational standards, and the desire for improved global rankings, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has become a central concern for governments and educational authorities (Abdal, 2024; Li & Dervin, 2018; NTC, 2020).

Broadly, CPD serves multiple functions, including aligning teaching practices with educational policies, enhancing student learning outcomes by improving teacher performance, and fostering the professional identity of educators (Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 22). Grundy and Robison (2005) categorize CPD into three key functions: extension, growth, and renewal. Extension refers to the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, growth focuses on the development of advanced competencies, while renewal emphasizes the transformation of teaching practices to adapt to evolving educational demands.

In contemporary education systems, governments increasingly deploy CPD as a strategic tool for reform, aimed at improving educational quality and student learning outcomes. For instance, Abdal (2024) highlights how CPD, with support from the World Bank, serves as a catalyst for educational reform in basic schools across selected countries. Similarly, Avalos (2005) provides evidence of CPD being utilized by governments across South America to drive large-scale educational transformations.

Beyond improving student learning, CPD also plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher professionalism (Li & Dervin, 2018). A critical review of Ghana’s CPD framework indicates that the Ghana Education Service (GES) has institutionalized CPD to develop the professional competence of teachers. The National Teaching Council (NTC, 2022) affirms this by stating: “The Teacher Professional Development Framework (…) formalizes a teacher’s responsibility and commitment to being a professionally competent and relevant practitioner” (NTC, 2022, p. 8). Thus, CPD has evolved from an individual responsibility into a state-driven initiative, ensuring that teachers remain professionally relevant and equipped to meet the changing demands of modern education.

**2.4 The Growing Focus on CPD in Ghanaian Educational Research**

In recent years, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) has gained significant attention among educational experts and stakeholders in Ghana, leading to a growing body of literature on the subject (Abakah, 2019, 2020; Abakah et al., 2023; Abreh, 2018; Amponsah, Ampadu & Thomas, 2023; Offei Kwakye, 2023; Mensah & Jonathan, 2016; NTC, 2022; Perry & Bevin, 2019; Salifu et al., 2024). Existing studies on CPD in Ghana cover a wide range of areas, reflecting its multifaceted role in teacher development and educational reform.

Several studies have examined CPD as a capacity-building intervention, particularly in relation to curriculum reforms and their implementation in Ghana (Perry & Bevin, 2019; Salifu et al., 2024; Abakah, 2023). Another strand of research has focused on CPD initiatives for teachers in basic education (Abakah, 2022; Kyakye, 2023), while others have explored the professional development of teacher educators in training institutions (Yaqub, Owusu-Cole & Ofosua, 2020; Nyaaba, Abdul-Gafaar & Akulga, 2023).

From a subject-specific perspective, CPD’s impact on teaching particular disciplines has been widely investigated (Osei-Owusu, 2020; Abreh, 2018; Goka, Assuah & Owu-Annan, 2023). For example, Abreh (2018) analyzed how CPD supports science and mathematics teachers in senior high schools, while Goka, Assuah & Owu-Annan (2023) demonstrated that CPD serves as a motivating factor for mathematics teachers in the Keta Municipality.

Despite the extensive research on CPD in Ghana, a notable gap exists regarding the perspectives of rural teachers. Studies have largely focused on urban and institutional settings, leaving the experiences and challenges of rural educators underexplored. To address this gap, the present study examines the perspectives of rural teachers on CPD in the Tolon District of Ghana, contributing to a more inclusive understanding of CPD’s impact on teacher development across different educational contexts.

2. methodology

This study adopted an explanatory sequential design within the mixed methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. In this approach, quantitative data collection served as the primary method, while qualitative data was used to supplement and further elaborate on the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data were collected through surveys and interviews, with the survey method deemed appropriate for capturing the perspectives of a larger population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture the lived experiences of teachers, thereby providing deeper insight into the quantitative results (Yin, 2011).

Employing a mixed methods approach allowed for methodological triangulation, effectively mitigating the limitations of each individual method and enhancing the validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study population comprised 270 Junior High School (JHS) teachers in the Tolon District of the Northern Region. The study chose JHS teachers because they are subject based teachers who require targeted professional development programmes to enhance their skills and effectiveness. In addition, their unique role as tutors to prepare students to sit for their first ever professional external examination makes them an ideal group for exploring CPD in rural areas, as they are required to possess requisite and updated knowledge and skills. Given the relatively small population size, a census approach was adopted, ensuring that all 270 teachers participated in the study. The use of a census method was justified by Cohen et al. (2018), who argued that it eliminates sampling error and yields highly accurate results.

For data collection, closed-ended questionnaires employing a five-point Likert scale were used to gather quantitative data, while an interview guide facilitated the collection of qualitative data. A total of ten teachers were purposively selected for face-to-face semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into the survey responses. In terms of data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to interpret the qualitative data.

While the findings of this study may have limitations in terms of generalizability, they provide a critical platform for amplifying the voices of rural teachers, whose perspectives are often overlooked in educational discourse. The study, therefore, contributes valuable insights into the professional experiences and development needs of teachers working in rural contexts.

3. results and discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Participants

As shown in Table 1, the demographic characteristics of the teachers, including age, gender, highest professional qualification, and work experience, were captured. The majority of participants (68.0%) were middle-aged, between 31 and 50 years old, followed by younger teachers aged 20 to 30 years (22.6%) and senior teachers aged 51 and above (9.4%). Regarding gender distribution, male teachers accounted for 66.0% of the sample, while female teachers made up 34.0%. In terms of educational qualifications, most participants (73%) pursued further studies beyond their initial teacher training. The highest qualification obtained by most teachers was a master's degree, though only 8.1% of the respondents had postgraduate degrees. A significant portion (65.2%) held bachelor's degrees, while 15.6% had diplomas and 9.2% had certificates. Additionally, 1.9% of respondents possessed other forms of certification. With respect to work experience, the majority of teachers (42.2%) had been in the profession for 6 to 10 years. Although only 6.3% had more than 21 years of experience, their insights provided valuable perspectives on long-term teaching careers. Table 1 presents a summary of these demographic characteristics.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Demography** | **Frequency** | **Percent (%)** |
| **Age** |  |  |
| 20 – 30 | 62 | 22.6 |
| 31-40 | 127 | 47.2 |
| 41-50 | 56 | 20.8 |
| 51-60 | 25 | 9.4 |
| **Sex** |  |  |
| Male | 178 | 66.0 |
| Female | 92 | 34.0 |
| **Highest Qualification** | | |
| Certificate | 25 | 9.2 |
| Diploma | 42 | 15.6 |
| Degree | 176 | 65.2 |
| Post graduate | 22 | 8.1 |
| Other | 5 | 1.9 |
| **Years of Teaching Experience** | | |
| 1-5 | 63 | 23.3 |
| 6-10 | 114 | 42.2 |
| 11-15 | 36 | 13.3 |
| 16-20 | 40 | 14.9 |
| 21+ | 17 | 6.3 |
| **Total** | **270** | **100.0** |

**N=270; Source: field data 2022**

**4.2 Rural Teachers Perspective on CPD**

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of rural teachers' perceptions of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the study collected data on their views regarding CPD. The analysis was conducted using the mean score as the primary statistical measure. For the interpretation of results, intervals were determined based on the Likert Scale used in the study. The range was first calculated using the formula: Range = (5−1)/5 = 0.80. Based on this computation, the following intervals were established for interpreting responses: Strongly Disagree: 1.0 – 1.8; Disagree: 1.9 – 2.6; Neutral: 2.7 – 3.4; Agree: 3.5 – 4.2; Strongly Agree: 4.3 – 5.0. The results of the study were analyzed and interpreted in accordance with these predefined intervals.

**Table 2: Perspectives of CPD by Teachers of Tolon District**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Perception** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| My school ought to do regular assessments to determine what kind of professional development I need | 4.82 | 0.38 |
| I believe that the CPD opportunities offered by my school and district are insufficient to further my career development | 4.11 | 1.05 |
| CPD grants me the opportunity to meet colleagues and friends from the same field of study | 3.88 | 1.02 |
| I believe that CPD more closely satisfies the needs of the district or school than it does my own learning needs | 4.55 | 0.69 |
| My school/district should create CPD for teachers using the needs found during appraisal system | 4.69 | 0.47 |
| I have acquired new competences, skills, and knowledge as a result of my involvement in CPD activities | 3.75 | 0.93 |
| My use of CPD from my school or district has no impact on my work as a teacher | 1.87 | 0.48 |
| It aids in resolving issues in the classroom and at school | 3.55 | 1.06 |
| It offers tips and techniques that are particularly beneficial for classroom management | 4.10 | 0.94 |
| It enhances positive change in my practice and behavior as a teacher | 3.89 | 0.92 |

**N=270; Source field data 2022. SD = Standard Deviation**.

According to the findings (Table 2), teachers perceived CPD to have a positive impact on their interactions with other teachers. They largely believed that CPD increased their optimism while teaching by assisting in the development of their competencies, ability to teach, and acquisition of new teaching skills. The participants believed that a periodic assessment should be conducted to determine the professional development needs of teachers as the means score (4.82) showed the teachers strongly agreed. With a mean score of 4.69, the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that designers of CPD programmes for teachers should use the needs assessment of teachers so order that CPD programmes would be tailored towards addressing the needs of teachers discovered during performance appraisal. This simply means that before developing any training programme, CPD service providers should consider the needs of the target participants. In view of the fact the CPD programmes do not consider the needs of teachers, they also concurred with a means score of 4.11 that the CPD opportunities offered by schools and districts are frequently insufficient to aid teachers in advancing their careers. The findings are buttressed by the evidence from the interviews. One of the participants opines that:

*As for me, the CPD opportunities that my district offers its teachers are not sufficient to support their professional development. However, it equally important I mention that I do acquire new skills and knowledge anytime we attend CPDs. I need to reiterate the district’s CPDs cannot make the professional I want to be* (Participant A, interview, 21/6/ 2023).

*A participant asserted that: The district education or district assembly usually organized CPD as a way of making money for themselves. They do not care about our professional development as teachers. They only care about making money* (Respondent D, interview, 7/6/ 2023).

*I had a big problem about our CPD policy makers because most CPD activities are organized without considering teachers classroom needs knowing how important or beneficial it is to in-service teacher development [sic*] (Respondent J, interview, 12/6/23).

The teachers also believed that CPD programmes have assisted them to acquire learn new skills, gain information, and develop competences in their area of expertise. Additionally, CPD offers suggestions and techniques for classroom management that are highly beneficial in resolving issues in the classroom and at school (see Table 2). The respondents agreed (with a mean score of 3.89) that CPD helps teachers to make positive changes to their practices and behaviors.

The responses suggested that teachers concur that CPD has a good impact on teachers' in-service training as it assists them to develop their competences, capacities to teach, and the acquisition of new teaching skills. These responses from the participants show that teachers want CPD policy makers to base their work on their needs analyses or performance appraisal when creating a CPD interventions for them. The research supports Osei-Owusu’s (2020) study, which found that CPD improves teachers' ability to manage their classrooms. The results are also in line with Desimone's (2009) assertion that CPD increases teachers' capacity to find and use worthwhile educational innovations.

Teachers in this study mentioned that creation of educational policies are not realistic to their classroom practice. These perceptions imply that the government's CPD policy framework did not adequately take into account the professional development needs of teachers and that teacher participation in the CPD policy-making process is minimal. However, every CPD strategy should ideally work to increase teachers' CPD levels (Wan, 2011). The perspectives of teachers should be carefully considered while developing an effective CPD policy. As the frontline personnel who work directly with schools and children in the field of education, teachers' disinterest in contributing to educational policy hampers decision-makers from getting enough data to satisfy the needs of students, teachers, and schools.

Some of the participants believe that the Tolon district only allots a small amount of time for teachers to engage in CPD activities. According to the participants, CPD sessions typically lasted one to three days, covered material that would typically take a term or year to exhaust and were compressed to fit into such brief time frames. In fact, due to the time constraints, the topics are not thoroughly examined, which had an impact on how much they may have learned. There is proof in the literature to suggest that CPD programs distributed throughout a semester or term are crucial for successful learning. However, the literature has not yet given the precise length of time for CPD programs (Abakah, 2019; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone, 2009).

Regarding the duration of CPD programmes for the implementation of the new curriculum, a participant communicated the following observation:

*The facilitators were only able to walk us through the course overview, and I must say that it was rushed. I believe the programme should have lasted a week or more, but it was only put together in two days, which wasn't the ideal approach to gain relevant knowledge* (Respondent C, interview, 07/6/2023).

Another participant showed how timing and length of the CPD programmes he had taken part in affected their effectiveness:

*I found the timing and length of such exercises to be problematic. How do you condense what should be taught over the course of a week into two or three days? It won't work, of course, and that's exactly what happened* (Respondent E, interview, 2023).

Without a doubt, length remained a key component of an efficient CPD design for teachers in the Tolon District. The length of time allotted for teachers' CPD activities had an impact on how well learning was facilitated and how much teachers really learned. Teachers thought that if CPD activities had taken place over a longer period of time, their CPD learning opportunities could have been more advantageous. Timing and duration are crucial for fostering teachers' active learning during CPD participation (Abakah, 2019). As a result, during the brief CPD course, instructors had little chance to observe and obtain constructive advice for their learning.

**4.3 Opportunities CPD Presents to Teachers**

Table 3- **Advantages of CPD to Teachers**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Opportunities** | **Yes** | | **No** | |
| **Freq** | **Percentage (%)** | **Freq** | **Percentage (%)** |
| CPD creates opportunities to interact with experts of the subject area | 139 | 87.4 | 20 | 12.6 |
| CPD creates an enhancement in career Development | 139 | 87.4 | 20 | 12.6 |
| CPD improves classroom pedagogies | 121 | 76.1 | 38 | 23.9 |
| CPD Improves intellect, personal skills and confidence | 120 | 75.5 | 39 | 24.5 |
| CPD Opens doors to excellent future employment opportunities | 139 | 87.4 | 20 | 12.6 |
| CPD Improves learning ability | 121 | 76.1 | 38 | 23.9 |
| CPD Promotes independent learning | 120 | 75.5 | 39 | 24.5 |
| CPD Demonstrates ambition and commitment to professional self-improvement | 139 | 87.4 | 20 | 12.6 |

**N=270; Source: field data, 2022**

The findings demonstrated that (see Table 3) CPD for teachers in schools presents the following opportunities: it creates avenues for teachers to interact with experts of the subject area, it creates an enhancement in teachers career development, it opens doors to excellent future employment opportunities and it demonstrates ambition and commitment to professional self-improvement. There were all rated 87.4%. by respondents.

In addition, CPD improves classroom pedagogies and as well improves learning ability of teachers; both rated 76.10% as benefits to teachers. The responses such as improves intellect, personal skills and confidence, and promotes independent learning were both also rated 75.50% as opportunities CPD create for teachers. Table 3 displays survey responses from participants. it is clear that CPD programmes in schools’ benefits teachers in the Tolon district by creating these opportunities for them.

Majority of the survey respondents believed that CPD creates opportunities for teachers as indicated in Table 3. The benefits identified support Tsion’s (2013) work in which he stated that, CPD gives teachers the chance to collaborate and reflect critically about majority of classroom issues. Teachers spend a lot of time working together on various CPD activities because they require teamwork to develop strong abilities, skills and friendship with experts. The opportunities for lifelong learning and knowledge expansion, according to the ministry of education (MoE, 2008), creates a professional platform where teachers can exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences with peers from the same and different schools also support the above findings. The quantitative findings are supported by the collaborated by the following interviews:

*The CPD we often engage in are tailor-made and are always directed at introducing new initiative and addressing identified challenges. In fact, it [CPD] allows us to meet subject experts, but this not frequent. At these meetings we are able to meet with our colleagues from other schools and place. It is always refreshing as we engage in the sharing of ideas* (Respondent L, interview, 4/6/2023).

*Yes, CPD provides and open opportunities for us. Personally, it provided me the platform to enhance my pedagogies. When I was being trained at the teacher college, there were certain pedagogies that we weren’t exposed to. But through CPD I’ve acquired them and always use them in my lesion delivery* (Respondent H, interview, 2/6/2023).

*Undoubtedly, CPD provides me several opportunities. In the first place, it gives me the opportunity to learn emerging pedagogies and classroom management skills. In addition, it motivates me as I am committed to learn independently anytime, I engage in CPD. Further, it provides me with the opportunity to improves my intellect, personal skills and confidence* (Respondent K, 23/6/2023).

**4.4 Discussion**

The study revealed that Junior High School (JHS) teachers in the Tolon District, a rural area in Ghana, agreed that CPD activities were beneficial to teachers in several ways. They stated that CPD programmes had helped them acquire new competencies, skills, and knowledge. In addition, CPD activities not only provided teachers with new classroom management strategies but also fostered positive changes in their teaching practices and professional behavior. These findings align with several previous studies (Abakah, 2019; 2022; Mensah, 2016; Kwakye, 2023), which recognize CPD as an essential tool for enhancing teacher effectiveness. Abakah’s (2019) study, for instance, found that CPD had a significant positive impact on basic school teachers by developing their competencies. Unlike the current study, however, Abakah also reported that CPD initiatives contribute substantially to teachers' ability to deliver quality education. Similarly, Owusu-Boateng observed that CPD empowers lecturers to acquire innovation and better teaching method, and also assist them to gain self-confidence and self-actualization.

Although this study demonstrated that teachers in rural areas acknowledged the opportunities CPD offers, they also indicated that the CPD programmes available to them are insufficient for advancing their careers. This result is consistent with Abakah’s (2019) exploration of the CPD needs of basic school teachers in Ghana. As Abakah (2019, p. 1) noted, “Teachers also revealed that existing CPD interventions inadequately address their specific development needs.” Moreover, teachers reported that they are often not consulted during the design of CPD programmes intended for them.

4. Conclusion

This study explored the perspectives of teachers in Tolon district of Ghana on continuous professional development in Ghana, shedding light the perspectives of rural teachers. The findings demonstrated that rural teachers acknowledge CPD as a crucial tool for professional growth, enhancing their instructional skills, subject knowledge and overall effectiveness in the classroom. This study highlights that while rural teachers recognize the significance of CPD in improving their teaching practices, giving the opportunity to interact with subject experts and colleagues, they reported issues of mis-directed CPD. Nonetheless, rural teachers demonstrate a strong willingness to engage in professional development programmes that are relevant, accessible and well structured. In order to engender impactful CPD for rural teachers, stakeholders (government and non-governmental organizations provide CPD programmes that align with the specific needs of rural teachers. Strengthening CPD opportunities would not only enhance rural teacher competency but also contribute to improve educational outcomes in rural Ghanaian communities.

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