



## Assessing The Effectiveness Of TDC's Activities In Influencing Professional Development Of Primary School Teachers In Malawi

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### Abstract:

This paper discusses the current situation of the continuous professional development (CPD) programs carried out at the Teacher Development Centers (TDCs) at primary schools in Malawi. The CPD activities at TDCs warrant more future research to determine their efficiency and sustainability. It was discovered that workshops, making lesson plans, and borrowing books for classroom use were the most common CPD programs at the TDCs. Other key CPD programs stipulated in the government's framework of TDC activities, meanwhile, were hardly offered and infrequently aligned with the teachers' needs for professional development. Additionally several factors have been determined to hinder the longevity and success of the CPD activities at the Teacher Development Centers. The amount of CPD activities that teachers participated in was also found to be low due to issues like a lack of proper TDC management mechanisms since PEAs who responsible for the management and training are often occupied with other activities and demonstrate lack of interest and motivation. The study concludes that the current CPD situation of teachers in TDCs reflects lack of a fully implemented CPD policy framework. In order to effectively provide, participate in, and monitor CPD activities for teachers in Malawi's TDCs, a more comprehensive CPT policy framework in is necessary.

**Keywords:** Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Teacher Development Center (TDC), Professional Development (PD), Government of Malawi (GoM), Ministry of Education (MoE)

## 1. Introduction

Malawi is a landlocked country situated in the south eastern part of Africa bordered by Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. With a population of almost 21 million people as of 2023, it is one of the most populated countries in sub Saharan Africa. Malawi was a British protectorate from 1891 until it regained its independence in 1964. Following independence, the new regime began a period of reformation in all sectors of governance. The education system of Malawi has consequently undergone fundamental and trans-formative changes since independence. Among those reforms was the establishment of the Free Primary Education policy in 1994. This policy led to the expansion of access to education for all Malawians and therefore created the need for more well trained and experienced teachers to meet the rising demand. The new regime also created Teacher Development Centers (TDC) to allow teachers to come together, learn and share their knowledge among themselves. TDC's till date are deemed a quick and effective means to encourage constant learning, sharing of knowledge and training for teachers to be able to handle the rising enrollments of students. They are also a means of a more stable, long term oriented continuous professional development among teachers. Teachers are also given space

to express their concerns, interests and offer each other constructive criticism. This paper explores the effectiveness of the TDCs as the major professional development mechanism for primary school teachers in Malawi since their establishment in 1994.

The rapid pace of social and academic advancement renders initial pre service training an insufficient foundation for permanent competency in the profession, necessitating continuous professional development for teachers as a means to upgrade and modernize their practices. Nevertheless, such programs for ongoing professional development ought to be created with an effective needs analysis, which is based on the teachers' understanding of educational programs, lessons, material, and pedagogy. The understanding frameworks serve as theoretical foundations for professional development. According to research, teachers who participate in the creation of professional development programs tend to succeed better. Hence we need to review the professional development programs for teachers in Malawi in connection to teacher understandings to determine their effectiveness.

The effectiveness of continuous professional development (CPD) programs at teacher development centers (TDCs) in Malawi has been an ongoing concern for the education sector. While the government of Malawi has committed to providing CPD programs to improve the quality of education and instruction in the country, there have been challenges in identifying how effective these programs are in improving teaching practices among teachers. Currently, there is a lack of information on the impact of CPD programs on teaching practices and student outcomes in Malawi. Despite the effort invested in providing CPD programs, there are still concerns regarding the quality and relevance of the content provided in these programs. Moreover, there are uncertainties regarding how well the programs are being implemented and followed up to ensure that teachers are able to effectively apply what they learn to their teaching practice.

Continuous professional development (CPD) programs are crucial to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high-quality education. In Malawi, the implementation of CPD programs varies across teacher development centers. It is unclear whether the CPD programs being delivered at these centers are effective in improving teaching quality and student outcomes. The limited research on the topic also creates a gap in understanding the potential barriers and challenges to implementing effective CPD programs in Malawi.

There is also a need to explore the effectiveness of CPD programs in TDCs in Malawi and the barriers that hinder the achievement of successful outcomes among teachers. It is essential to assess the extent to which teachers who participate in the CPD programs are integrating the new teaching strategies and approaches learned in the classroom as well as the effect on student learning outcomes.

Moreover, such studies should provide information on how the TDCs can strengthen their CPD programs by identifying areas needing improvement, the swiftest and most relevant methods to support professional growth of teachers, and the most effective approaches to sustain and support CPD programs. Such an assessment will be invaluable in guiding policymakers and education stakeholders in Malawi in devising more effective CPD programs that can positively impact the quality of instruction and education outcomes.

### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the current CPD programs being offered at teacher development centers in Malawi, and how do they vary across the country?

2. What is the effectiveness of CPD programs in improving teaching quality and student outcomes at teacher development centers in Malawi?

**Aims and Objectives:**

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of continuous professional development programs at teacher development centers in Malawi. The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the most prevalent type of continuous professional development programs offered at teacher development centers in Malawi.
2. To assess the extent to which teachers participate in continuous professional development programs in Malawi.
3. To examine the effectiveness of continuous professional development programs in enhancing teacher knowledge and skills in Malawi at TDC's.
4. To explore the challenges faced by teachers in participating in continuous professional development programs in Malawi.
5. To provide recommendations for improving the quality and effectiveness of continuous professional development programs in Malawi.

**Significance of the Study:**

The study is significant in several ways:

First, it will provide insights into the types of continuous professional development programs currently being offered at teacher development centers in Malawi. This information can be used to improve the quality and relevance of these programs.

Second, the study will help to assess the extent to which teachers in Malawi are participating in continuous professional development programs and identify the factors that may be hindering their participation. This information can be used to develop strategies to encourage more teachers to participate in these programs.

Third, the study will evaluate the effectiveness of continuous professional development programs in enhancing teacher knowledge and skills. This evaluation will help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current programs and inform the development of more effective programs.

Fourth, the study will provide recommendations for improving the quality and effectiveness of continuous professional development programs in Malawi. These recommendations can be used by policy-makers and educators to improve the overall quality of education in Malawi.

Overall, the study will contribute to the development of a more effective and efficient education system in Malawi by enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers through continuous professional development programs at the TDC's.

## **2. Background of Education in Malawi**

This section briefly explores the historical precedents of education in Malawi during the British rule, one party rule and multi-party democracy in Malawi. Historical precedents for Malawi's education system before gaining independence were based on the schools that European Christian missionaries first built starting in 1875. The first Department of Education (DOE) was formed in 1926 after a period of British colonial mismanagement. In order to teach moral values and devotion to the British crown, the colonial administration of Britain developed a centralized primary school curriculum in 1933. This curriculum included the study of British history and English. Secondary (high school) education was first offered in the then-Nyasaland Protectorate in 1941, and it was based on an exclusive academic system. The prevailing educational discourse that was given particular attention was the British colonial story (MoE, 1973).

Years after independence, in the face of a turbulent colonial past, Malawi struggled to overcome challenges in the development of its public education system. Education in Malawi before 1994 was largely underdeveloped, with Gross Enrollment Rates (GER) and average national years of education completion far below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Prior to Malawi attaining independence in 1964, education in the region had been systemically oppressed by the British authorities. They maintained a significantly lower allocation for education in the budget than for other sectors, such as agriculture and infrastructure. Discriminatory policies limited the wages of African teachers, forcing many to abandon the profession and leaving an educative void in the rural areas. After receiving independence in 1964, Malawi aligned its education system to the model used in British schools. This system was characterized by rigid hierarchy and patronage, leading to endemic corruption at the highest levels of the system according to the National Economic Council provision (2000). Furthermore, the introduction of One Party Rule by Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda in 1966 had a dramatic impact on the education system of Malawi. Close to the ideals of Apartheid, educational institutions were segregated along the lines of gender, class, and ethnicity. This left Malawi's educational system ill-equipped to deal with the changing global market, with a lack of access to digital resources and trained faculty hampering progress. In addition, high taxation, unbalanced budget allocations, and centrally operated grant assistance all contributed to the continued development disparity of the education system (MoE, 2009).

The economic policies of the Dr Banda government before 1994, took a hard-line stance against the embrace of modern technology, limiting the possibility for educational advancement. The introduction of the new, democratic government after 1994 made significant improvements to the educational system of Malawi, by abolishing the unconstitutional policies of Dr Banda's authoritarian rule. Increased funding, decentralization of the curriculum, and greater availability of primary and secondary education have all helped to propel Malawi's educational system into the 21 century. Furthermore, the democratized system of governance has had a stabilizing effect, allowing for greater development of the people and nation. These improvements were accompanied by a greater degree of international aid, as well as an increased intake of refugees from neighboring countries (Bentrovato, 2017).

### **Introduction of the Teacher Development Centers (TDCs)**

In 1994, Malawi became the first country in Sub Saharan Africa to adopt the Free Primary Education (FPE) to provide equal access to education for all. Primary education was given high emphasis by the new administration after democratic elections were held in 1994 because it was thought to be essential to the government's broader strategy for reducing poverty. Due to this change, education increasingly received the majority of government recurrent spending. In the academic year of 1994-1995 enrollment increased to 3.2 million from 1.9 million student (Yoas 2001). Government set out to recruit many teachers to meet the increased demand for students, and about 22,000 inadequately qualified teachers were recruited to supplement the few qualified ones. As a result, the nation faced a worsening quality of teaching and learning in the primary institutions (USAID Malawi 2004).

As a means to provide quality training for the unqualified teachers, government firstly created the Integrated In-service Teacher Program (IITP). In this program, teachers were placed in teachers training colleges for an intensive training in teaching methods for a period of three months during the primary students academic holiday (Yoas 2001). After the training they received more professional support from headteachers and Primary Education Advisors. Further efforts to provide teachers professional development led to the establishment of Teachers Development Centers (TDC's) throughout the country.

More than 316 TDCs were built during the years 1998 and 2004. Every TDC handles a zone that contains all local secondary/high schools and a group of approximately 15 primary schools. Over 1000 TDC's have actively operating and working since 2020. A TDC is a room with a size of a double classroom, situated within one of the school grounds, in the center of the zonal division (GoM 2008). Primary Education Advisors (PEA) are responsible for the TDC's. Their primary role is to chair, manage, train, budget, report all activities at the TDC. PEA's report to District Education Managers (DEM's) who make up the Education District Assembly (EDA).

### **Activities at the Teacher Development Centers (TDCs)**

TDC's serve a number of purposes ranging from teacher, parents, and community members based initiatives. Primary school teachers activities at the TDC's include seminars, workshops, subject related committees, meetings with peers, creation of teaching and learning materials, demonstration/model lessons, information and feedback dissemination, provision of education materials e.g. books, recreational activities e.g. sports, drama, and implementation of initiatives from NGO's and civil society groups in schools (GoM 2008).

Finding efficient teaching techniques in the zone is one of the TDC's most crucial responsibilities. An educational institution might possess a well-organized school management team that results in substantial improvements in the classroom; another institution may have a teacher who demonstrates tremendous talent in managing young kids. These beneficial techniques can be presented at the TDC so that they are disseminated throughout the zone. With the use of this TDC, individual teacher growth and school advancements can be connected to advancement in the entire zone. It is one method of aiming for increases in educational quality.

TDC's are also responsible for promoting the enhancement of management skills. They have exercises designed to support teachers who are in charge of leading and managing others in a school in particular. Like teaching, it is occasionally mistakenly believed that leadership and management do not require ongoing education, but experience in the real world demonstrates that the finest leaders are the ones who understand the importance of continuing their education. Head instructors who have the backing of their peers in a regular group within the TDC are aware that they have a place to turn for help. They can discuss issues with friends who can offer advice. The value of teamwork, scheduling group meetings, and providing feedback to one another are central within modern development in management practice. Through this practice, teacher leaders are able to gain the required skills gradually and become better over time.

One of TDC's in Malawi major role is to address the needs of individual teachers, local community and the nation. On the individual level, Malawian primary school teachers are eager to advance their careers. They have frequently used the community TDC's tools for self-help and self improvement. They do so through obtaining books, access to computers and Online learning at the TDC's. The TDCs have also been used by teachers for their study groups.

TDC's are also entrusted in responding to the needs of the local community. As aforementioned, an approach towards institutional improvement includes teacher development. Assessing the school's

accomplishments in facilitating learning for pupils by stakeholders is a crucial step in making reforms to the school. In accordance with the school's goal, the participants i.e, pupils, teachers, and the community prioritize different strategies for the enhancement of learning. The result is a school reform plan, which is a yearly action agenda with tasks intended to meet predetermined learning goals. Needs for teacher development will become apparent during the planning phase for school improvement. The teacher growth strategy for the school can address these issues.

It is crucial that ongoing professional development reflect, relate to, and address nationally decided goals, besides mainly focusing on the requirements of schools and individual teachers. For instance, the national curriculum should be implementable by every teacher and other learners. There are significant consequences for training if the national curriculum is being revised. Without teacher development, curriculum development cannot happen. The method for informing all teachers of continuing reform activities is to use the zones as mediums, which has a chain of TDCs serving a variety of primary schools. The zonal system also assumes the duty of completing pertinent training for the successful implementation of curriculum changes. Additionally, there can be a need for particular teacher and other teacher groups on a nationwide basis. For instance, the national has started to give much recognition on the needs to improve numeracy, reading and writing among young learner from grade 1 to grade 4.

**Others activities at the TDC include;**

curriculum development,

Identifying the needs of teachers and planning on such undertakings

Providing resources such as books, student and teachers study materials

Identifying, sharing and exchanging expertise

**Characteristics of the TDCs**

Professional development activities comprises a maximum of 30 teachers that are/must be selected from different schools in a given zone. According to the Ministry of Education an average zonal area has about 160 teachers. The groups are organized using different criterion as subject based, term(semester) based, class/grade based. A specific date is set for each group to attend. It is also crucial that ongoing professional development reflect, relate to, and address nationally decided goals, besides mainly focusing on the requirements of schools and individual teachers. For instance, the national educational framework should be implementable by every teacher and other learners. There are significant consequences for training if the national curriculum is being revised. Without teacher development, curriculum creation cannot happen. The method for informing all teachers of continuing reform activities is to use the zones as mediums, which has a chain of TDCs serving a variety of primary schools. The zonal system also assumes the duty of completing pertinent training for the successful implementation of curriculum changes. Additionally, there can be a need for particular teacher as well as other teacher groups on a nationwide basis.

**3. Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

**Definition of Professional Development (CP) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

There have been varying definitions of the the term professional development and continuous professional development. Gall and Renchler define PD as attempts to enhance the ability of educators to operate as productive professionals through helping them learn novel concepts, attitudes, and skill (1985, p 6). Fullan (1995, p. 265) described PD as the combined effect of both formal and informal instruction undertaken and observed by the teacher in an appealing educational setting under circumstances characterized by complexity and dynamic change. Professional development, according to Joyce and colleagues (1988), is formal and informal procedures for the enhancement of teachers as people, trained individuals, and experts, and also in terms of the capacity to carry out their specified. Professional development is further described by Day as completely natural educational experiences as well as deliberate and planned actions that are meant to benefit a person, organization, or group directly or indirectly and that, as a result, improve the standard of teaching in the classroom (Day 1999). Teacher development, according to Glatthorn, is the growth that a teacher experiences as a result of accumulating more experience and carefully analyzing how they teach (Glatthorn, 1995).

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a continuous process that includes learning, teaching, and support activities whereby teachers review, renew and extend their teachings through this learning process (Bolam 2004). CPD is an ongoing, structured learning and development process that helps employees to maximize their potential and contribute to both their professional and personal development (McDonnell & Zutshi 2010). In order to develop creative ideas and methods and develop an optimistic mindset regarding individual and change in institutions, CPD should provide instructors with the chance to exchange and analyze their observations and methods in teaching and learning (Burbank 2003). Institutions (public and private, economic and civic, profit and non-profit) must use it as their exclusive tactic to raise employee efficiency standards. CPD can also take place in fewer formal settings, like exchanges among coworkers, personal reading and learning, watching a peer's teaching, or picking up other skills from a colleague. The goal is the same whether it is referred to as staff development, in-service training, professional learning, or continuing education; it aims to enhance learning for both lecturers and students (Mphale 2014).

Effective CPD, should first recognize and cater to the unique requirements of teachers (Bredeson 2003). Such activities must be carefully developed after such requirements have been determined to aid teachers in putting their expertise and teaching methods to innovative and effective use (Anderson, 2001). According to Collinson (2012), the most favorable outcomes are attained when the activities are explicitly and methodically prepared, laid out, and focused on fostering individual and professional development through the expansion of abilities, expertise, and positive attitudes.

The aforementioned descriptions make it abundantly evident that CPD is important for teachers and schools to provide high-quality education generally by rendering teachers the main players for enhancing their individual teaching abilities in cooperation with their coworkers and pupils in the workplace. CPD is described as "a means through which people undertake ownership of their personal educational and professional growth by pursuing a continuous cycle of observation and engagement" (Megginson 2003,).

### **CPD in Malawi**

In the continuing professional development framework for teachers and teacher educators, the GoM defines CPD as stipulated by OECD to describe activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher. To stay current and relevant throughout their careers, all teachers and teacher educators must continually grow their knowledge, abilities, and other traits. CPD, which is done in the form of a number of activities, allows for this to happen. Self-learning, distant learning, digital learning, peer to peer teaching, and mentor teaching are just a few of the different formats that the activities might take (GoM 2018).

CPD was described by the MoE (2009) as "All things which renders you a better teacher" (p. 15). Additionally, the General Education Council (GTC) for Britain claims that CPD is what educators engage in to maintain their professional work as being engaging, current, and fresh. Teachers undertaking CPD are more likely

to motivate students and teach more efficiently, helping them achieve their highest potential by engaging in a variety of CPD activities. (Kempton, 2013) We can infer from the MoE description that teachers ought to get involved in any program that increases their competence in the classroom, and we can infer from GTCs that CPD supports teachers in developing their subject-specific knowledge and didactic and technical expertise so they can provide high-quality instruction that inspires students to reach their potential.

Overall, it is clear from the aforementioned definitions that CPD is something that teachers ought to perform in order to enhance their pupil's academic performance and retention by providing high-quality instruction. This includes teachers assessing their gaps, learning in new ways, updating their professional and subject-specific knowledge and skills, as well as teaching competencies. Additionally, this supports our performance in school and helps us grow personally and professionally. But not all of them are possible without efficient CPD in schools.

Theoretically, Day's arguments regarding the institutional needs for CPD and the literature on professional development strategies as reviewed by Richards and Farrell 2005 will be employed as the main sources for this work. They bring up organizational and personal perspectives for professional development of teachers. According to page 9, "Professional development is directed toward the goals of both the institutions and the teacher's own particular interests." They note several areas from the standpoint of the teacher's personal development which are; a) knowledge of the subject, topic and teaching abilities b) self-knowledge c) knowledge of students d) knowledge of the courses and the materials, as well a advancement in career.

Richards advises that teachers engage in the following activities to achieve their professional growth objectives: a) doing self-analysis and evaluation b) expanding their knowledge of research, theory, and teaching-related issues, c) incorporating on novel duties and tasks such as management or coaching, researching, or course writing; creating cordial working relationships with fellow teachers.

Corresponding to this, the MOE's framework in Malawi suggests that the CPD process ought to encompass five elements: needs analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (reference be included) across every level, which include individual (teacher), department, zone, district, and national categories.

#### **4. Methodology**

The TDCs in Malawi are an adaption of the TCs, that originated from Britain in the 1960s and became one of the largest and most widely used support methods for PD globally (Fairhurst et al, 1999). The assumption that reform in education, or at least improvement in education, is possible through a shift in instructors is, in a nutshell where the necessity for TCs originated (Adams, 1975) TCs then sought to transform the teachers' capacities, knowledge, and abilities in order to assist practicing teachers in addressing their own requirements for extension, growth, and development. (Hostak, 1987).

The data in this paper is available courtesy of Grace Mkandawire Banda who conducted in depth research for her PhD dissertation on the influence of Teacher Development Centers of Malawi on the professional development of teachers in Malawi. Her research was widely published and contained comprehensive data that may be applicable to various research on TDC's and professional development. Due to her vast experience working as a teacher, Primary Education Advisor, Research advisor and other relevant positions credits her better for this research. In this paper both qualitative and quantitative research were used although I will only employ the quantitative data obtained through surveys and questions provided to key stakeholders in the research.

Four TDCs in rural and urban Zomba in Malawi's South East Division were used for the study. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews and questionnaire surveys, as well as both quantitative and

qualitative methodologies, to gather data. The questionnaire surveys included a total of 586 teachers. The interviews that were partially structured involved a total of 16 teachers and 22 other important education professionals who were strategically connected to the establishment of the TDCs for TPD in Malawi. She also employed both methodological and triangulation of data sources to strengthen the reliability of the data and the conclusions.

## 5. Data and Discussion

### 1. Activities at TDC'S

As stated in the Government of Malawi's framework and guidelines on the TDC's, a number of activities were put in place to be undertaken. In this study conducted by Mrs Grace Mkandawire, the participants acknowledged that a lot of activities were indeed taking place in the TDC's. However, the question is whether those activities are actually aiding the teachers in their professional development. Teachers included in the study noted that the activities they do frequently were; borrowing textbooks to use for teaching, developing learning and teaching materials as well usual meetings concerned with curriculum changes.

Appendix D: Frequency Tables

Appendix D1: Frequency of teachers involved in TDC activities

Statements	Teacher sex (%)		Teacher qualification (%)		Teacher management position (%)		TDC setting (%)		TOTAL (%)
	Male	Female	MSCE	JCE	Yes	No	Rural	Urban	
Meetings with the PEA	88.1	84.3	85.8	86.2	89.5	80.7	87.9	85.2	86.2
Meetings with teachers from other schools.	74.3	71.5	71.9	73.4	71.9	73.4	73.8	72.0	72.7
Preparation of teaching and learning materials	76.3	68.2	69.7	73.4	74.1	67.7	75.7	69.4	71.7
TDC Fund-raising committee meetings	70.4	67.5	61.3	69.9	70.5	58.3	71.0	62.9	65.9
Meetings with community members	67.6	61.9	60.6	67.6	67.8	58.7	68.6	61.8	64.3
Training courses for school managers	70.4	59.5	56.2	66.3	73.0	49.8	65.9	63.2	64.2
TDC management committee meetings	70.4	57.4	60.2	65.4	68.0	54.7	66.4	61.0	63.0
Subject committee meetings	61.3	60.4	60.6	60.9	63.6	56.1	69.2	55.9	60.8
Borrowing books from the TDC library	72.3	51.7	58.0	62.8	66.9	50.2	61.7	60.0	60.6
Orientation to the examinations procedures	67.6	48.6	56.6	57.1	62.8	47.1	55.6	57.5	56.7
Reading in the TDC library	76.3	68.2	49.6	53.5	57.0	43.0	56.1	49.2	51.7
INSET course for teachers	52.2	48.0	69.7	73.4	51.5	47.1	46.3	51.9	49.8
Study circles	45.8	38.1	39.8	42.9	43.8	37.7	39.7	42.5	41.5
Dissemination of research findings	35.6	33.6	31.8	36.9	36.1	31.2	38.8	32.0	34.5

Source Banda (2012)

This means a number of CPD activities stated in the framework are not carried out or they are minimally implemented. These include, development of teaching techniques in the zone, knowledge sharing, demonstrative lessons and inspections, promoting the enhancement of management skills, addressing the needs of individual teachers, local community and the nation as a whole. Although teachers agreed to doing some PD related activities, they also mentioned a number of PD unrelated activities. These included, wedding meetings, prayers and activities organized by Non-Governmental Organizations. Although the framework allows for social and recreational events such as sports and drama, activities like weddings and prayers are not supposed to occur in the TDC's according to the framework's guidelines. This also raises a management concern on why such events occur at TDC's and their frequency. This has an impact on affecting the utility of the TDC's. Therefore, it can be argued that the activities taking place in the TDC's have minimum influence on the teachers' professional development as they do not address key issues on continuous professional development.

## 2. Professional growth

In the study, a good percentage of teachers agreed that the PD programs at the TDC's have had a positive impact on their career growth and advancement. The teachers' perceptions greatly changed with the PD programs and helped them advance in the following areas: professional growth, lesson preparation skills, classroom instructional skills and classroom management skills. 88.2 percent of teachers reported that the PD in TDC's improved their professional leadership skills while 65.8% reported that TDC's helped them to get promoted to senior positions. Overall these activities at the TDC have had a positive outcome for teacher in their PD.

**Appendix E1: Frequency of teachers who changed in professional growth**

<b>My involvement with the TDC has helped me to</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Number agreed</b>	<b>Percentage agreed</b>
Improve my interest as a teacher	76	71	93.4
Improve my professional leadership skills	76	67	88.2
Work with teachers from other schools	76	65	85.5
Work with other teachers within the school	76	62	81.6
Become an expert in teaching	76	61	80.3
Improve relationship with other institutions	76	59	77.6
Improve my professional qualification	76	58	76.3
Improve my academic qualification	76	53	69.7
Get promoted to senior position	76	50	65.8

Nevertheless, it puzzling to try to find a connection between such minimal activities at the TDC's and their professional growth. There seem to lack a clear and concrete connection on how these aforementioned activities in the TDC's might influence such results on professional growth. Two possibilities might try to explain such trends.

The first possibility is that there might be other activities taking place at the TCD's that are not stipulated in the framework and or were not explored in the study. For example 69.7% of the teachers reported that their involvement in TDC's have helped improve their academic qualifications. It is not clear in the framework whether teachers gain some academic acknowledgments, licenses or certificates from their involvement with the TDC's.

The second possibility is that teachers were able to work on self improvement with time and gaining more experience as teachers. For example 80.3% of the teachers reported that their involvement in the TDC's helped them to become expert teachers while 76.3% reported that TDC's helped with their professional qualifications. This might also be true with gaining more work experience from teaching for a period of time or attending TDC's for sometime.

## 3. The role of management ON TDC's Activities

The duties of Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) are outlined in Section 3.2.3 of the "guidelines for the oversight of education operations assigned to district assemblies". PEAs have a variety of duties, among which include managing the monetary requirements of TDCs and providing coaching for the teachers there.

### 3.2.3 Responsibilities of Primary Education Advisors (PEAs)

Duties of Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) will basically be:

- (1) Advise primary school head teachers and teachers in the zone on curriculum issues, methodologies and management of schools
- (2) Conduct in-service training for primary school teachers in Teacher Development Centres (TDCs)
- (3) Supervise primary school teachers in their teaching
- (4) Inspect primary school teachers
- (5) Compile report and data on activities carried out in schools
- (6) Assist the DEM in accounting for expenditures incurred in their Zones
- (7) Determine the budgetary requirements for schools and TDCs within their Zones

Source: Government of Malawi; Ministry of Science and Technology (2008)

Although not clearly stated in the guidelines, the research done by Mrs Grace Mkandawire Banda, reveals that PEAs are also responsible for the management of all TDC's activities. Therefore they are in charge of management, training and budgeting and all TDC related activities. As indicated in the guidelines, PEAs have a lot of involving responsibilities questioning whether they may actually be capable of fulfilling all the duties and more especially managing all TDC activities. Because PEAs are often busy, teachers are left to tend to themselves with poor equipped staff which in turn discourages them from attending frequently. Although 59.4% of teacher reported that TDC's have adequate staff to assist teachers, 45.45% reported that the TDC staff were trained on how to use the TDCs, and only 47.1% reported that the TDC staff assist the teachers on how to use to TDCs.

#### Appendix F2: Frequency of teacher perceptions of TDC management

Statements about the management of the TDC	N	Number agreed	Percentage agreed
The TDC has adequate staff to assist teachers	586	348	59.4
The TDC provides time for teachers to visit the TDC	586	313	53.4
The TDC has plans for teacher support	586	313	53.4
There are guidelines for the use of the TDC	586	285	48.6
The TDC staff assist teachers on how to use the TDC	586	276	47.1
The TDC has trained staff trained in the use of the TDC	586	266	45.4
Most teachers know how to use the TDC resources	586	261	44.5
The TDC provide leadership in TPD	586	247	42.2
It is cheap to run teacher activities at the TDC	586	247	42.2
The TDC has money for TPD	586	224	38.2
The TDC has information on how to use the TDC	586	212	36.2
The TDC has plans for raising funds	586	108	18.4

Source Banda (2012)

The study also noted a pattern of misunderstandings between PEAs and teachers. In several instances, PEAs would request teachers to vacate the TDC premises because there other activities such as weddings or prayers to take place. In some cases PEAs mistreat teachers, and picking favorites among teachers. PEAs were also reported to take ownership of TDCs as their personal possession and would not provide access to teachers if they so wish. PEAs would also personally invite people they desired regardless of training needs to attend TDC activities. A number of teachers reported that they had never been invited to attend any TDC activities. Some schools reported that no teacher from their school was ever invited to attend the activities.

The behavior of PEAs create more concerns about the implementation of TDCs. Firstly, are there any undertakings provided where PEAs might be monitored, evaluated, and consequently given feedback about their management of TDCs. Although PEAs report to District Education Managers (DEMs), there is no information or guideline that indicates whether DEMs have implemented any policies of tackling TDC management related issues. Secondly, because the position of a PEA is higher than a teacher, there is no information that outlines conflict management within the TDCs. This issue might also explain why a lot of teachers also reported that they are not involved or stopped involving themselves in TDC activities because they want to avoid conflicts with the PEAs. These findings are very problematic because PEAs are crucial in helping implement the guidelines stipulated in the GOM framework. Therefore their lack of motivation, interest and time to foster the TDC's make the whole initiative a failure.

It is evident from this study that the management of TDCs according to the teachers is not effective enough. A lot managerial aspects need to be addressed. For instance, teachers lack information on how to use TDCs' resources, guidelines, and activities.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study was aimed to assess whether the activities provided the TDC's are effective in promoting professional development among primary school teachers in Malawi. Primary school teachers' continuous professional development in Malawi is a subject that warrants more research. The establishment of TDCs in Malawi to provide the space for teachers' PD activities has potential to become a very good initiative if it is well implemented. Although PD activities for teachers are widely researched abroad, in Malawi such studies are very minimal. It is clear that teachers need continuous professional development in dealing with the ever changing global society. Therefore it is very crucial that CPD activities for teachers constitutes of meaning programs that meet the needs of teachers, community and society. Conclusions from this study indicate that the available activities at the TDCs are inadequate to meet enable teachers deal with the complex nature of a rapidly changing society. It is also very crucial that such activities and TDC must provide a welcoming atmosphere for teachers to gain access, assistance and opportunities to attend TDC activities. Teachers are welcoming of such initiatives for their personal and professional development. The main areas that are concerning are the contents of the activities at the TDC and their influence on professional development. Another concerning issue is the lack of effective management of TDC due to busy, untrained staff and managers. More studies are needed to determine the monitoring and evaluation processes for the managers of TDCs.

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