



MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION



Report on  
**Professional Development  
Needs Survey**

Higher Studies Cell  
26 April 2021



The rationale of this professional development needs survey report, as part of the assigned mandate of the Higher Studies Cell, is to offer a scientific and empirical basis for strategising the expansion of MIE's post graduate portfolio. The study aimed at mapping teachers' understanding of their professional development needs within the past and present contexts of their work lives, personal aspirations for professional growth and career pathway.

The study was conceptualised using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It adopted a two phased survey design with a self-administered questionnaire followed by group interviews. 1053 secondary school teachers, took part in the questionnaire stage survey sampled out of 36 public and state sponsored secondary schools. The study used a maximum variation sampling strategy for the quantitative phase where representativeness was achieved along the lines of keeping the sample as close as possible to the diverse profile of the population. A more restricted sample of approximately 141 teachers, carried in 16 secondary schools, participated in the unstructured group interviews of 7-10 teachers per school on average. The quantitative data was processed statistically and content analysis was carried on the qualitative elements provided by the open ended items and themes derived from the quantitative phase. The qualitative data from interviews were analysed thematically to offer added insights on the issues identified in the open-ended items of the questionnaire. The data from both phases were then presented and interpreted using the lens of theories and concepts indicated in the literature review section.

The theoretical frameworks used related to Hargreaves (2000) conception of four ages of professionalism, Kennedy's (2005, 2014) models of professional development, teacher career cycles (Goodall et al, 2005) and teacher professional needs (Harris, 2000). These are used to interpret the data.

### Findings (Quantitative)

- 68% of teachers reported that CPD opportunities were related to examinations changes and curriculum changes induced by reforms. Only 10% of CPD opportunities were related to subject specialism apart from those provided by reform imperatives.
- More than 50% of teachers had less than 5 days of CPD in the past two years, indicating the predominance of the spray on approach to CPD.

- About 36% of teachers (whether on permanent, contract or probation status) expressed their intentions to pursue CPD in the next two to five years. There were interests for PGDIP, Masters and Doctoral level courses.
- 80% of teachers in non permanent employment situation seek to improve their employment condition by upgrading qualifications to a Masters level course
- The three priority choices for CPD included **classroom management, integrating educational technology into teaching, and teaching adolescents with learning difficulties.**
- The topmost priorities for post graduate specialisation included **leadership and management, educational psychology, subject specialism, pedagogy and educational technology.**
- Teachers showed a preference for blended mode of delivery for CPD due to increased access and convenience.
- Teachers suggested in situ CPD to align professional development to school realities instead of the university as the only site for professional development.
- With regard to factors influencing their choice of formal CPD courses, 50% of the teachers stated that the critical decisive elements are cost, duration and delivery mode.
- About 20% of the respondents are prepared to invest up to Rs 100 000 in their CPD at Master's level.
- 50% of teachers having more than 10 years of experience require professional development to deal with the challenges occasioned by changing profile of students.

## Findings (Qualitative data)

Qualitative data from the open-ended items in the questionnaire and from the group interviews revealed the following key priorities:

- (i) knowledge and skills to manage student learning and behaviour in large classes;
- (ii) legal, pedagogical and practical/technical knowledge to deal with disciplinary issues;
- (iii) values education, training in psychology/counselling, as well as special needs, and enhanced pedagogical skills and assessment techniques

Teachers identify such areas of professional development in order to feel more in control of their practice and to be better able to understand and motivate students especially those coming from diverse backgrounds and with challenging lived experiences.

- The dominant view is that there should be a closer match between course content and the knowledge and skills teachers think they need to deal with classroom realities. CPD that does not provide a quick and ready-made solution to teachers are not found to be valuable. Teachers want to feel impactful and efficacious in contributing to students' learning in a way that is compatible with the system.
- There is an understanding among teachers that CPD is primarily meant to problem solve issues around the curriculum, syllabus, textbook and assessment. Indeed, they wish to have CPD opportunities that collaboratively involve different stakeholders, for example, the Mauritius Institute of Education, Mauritius Examination Syndicate and Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology so that they can get a cohesive understanding of what they are expected to achieve, especially in the context of the current educational reforms.
- CPD provided by the MIE is described as out-of-touch with school realities, not up to date with international trends, overly theoretical in nature and cumbersome due to the assessment load. Additionally, the lack of trust and credibility in the expertise of the institution and its staff to deliver relevant and valuable CPD is emphasised.
- Teachers value theoretical knowledge when it is in their subject area, while knowledge in the fields of pedagogy tend to be perceived as a craft. Such a view of what constitutes the formal identity and professionalisation of teachers, combined with the above dominant views of CPD needing to address immediate contextual problems, show that teachers' understanding of their CPD needs align with what Hargreaves (2000) describes as the pre-professional age.
- The data, however, also reveals marginal dissonant teacher voices which indicate that CPD provisions at the MIE offer adequate professional development opportunities but that these are often discarded by teachers because they will not obtain further credentials in the form of an increment or because they prefer the pecuniary benefits that private tuition offer.
- Overall, the ways in which teachers articulated their CPD needs demonstrate they juggle between the competing demands, on the one hand, of performativity and actionable knowledge and skills for problem solving, and on the other hand of quality education and knowledge that will contribute to their personal and professional growth.
- Teachers indicated their preference for the following ideal/ unrealistic combination regarding CPD: affordable, online or in-situ, possibly masters level courses benchmarked at international level, which have immediate transferability to their practice. These courses should be mediated by tutors who have substantial classroom experience and take place during school time.

- CPD construed as an on-going feature through the setting up of learning communities, especially online, not only among teachers but also with school leaders and administrators thereby providing a common platform to collaboratively deal with issues, but also to share and discuss best practices was mentioned as an interesting mode of engagement for teachers at different career stages and with varying experiences.
- A needs based approach to CPD is advocated with specific courses on improving student retention, diagnosing learning difficulties, such as responding to dyscalculia, working within resource impoverished contexts are some of the suggestions made.
- Teachers are interested in developing pedagogical crisis management strategies to deal with high needs students.
- Teachers want to be involved in framing their CPD, steering what they learn, how they they will learn and where they will learn so that they can make content knowledge accessible and attractive to students.
- Teachers plateau quite early in their career lifespan embracing powerlessness and professional despair primarily due to inability to assert authority, to keep students on task and to influence students' learning and achievement.
- Technology, teachers believe, holds part of the answer to respond to their professional challenges but it is not in the form of current workshops dealing generally with qualities and possibilities of softwares but rather concrete subject discipline teaching.
- Previous experiences of CPD did not alter entry conceptions of professionalism which remains entrenched in the pre professional age where practice makes practice.

## Recommendations:

- The findings above indicate a need to weave in teachers' field knowledge, agency, and voice in the design and development of teacher education programmes and courses.
- A move from a one size fits all model to a nuanced differentiated approach to programme designs and respective subject areas will increase the likelihood of teachers integrating their knowledge, skills and learning into their practice.
- The professional curriculum offered should provide as much choice as possible allowing teachers to choose different combinations and permutations of learning opportunities and experiences to empower them in their practice.

- Irrespective of approach deployed, courses should move from theory for theory's sake or content for content's sake, routinized teaching and learning activities to harnessing knowledge, skills, dispositions, and pedagogical competencies, in situ.
- We suggest four paradigmatic re orientations :
  - (i) CPD constructed around specialist knowledge as the driving force serves to relate CPD experiences to classroom realities.
  - (ii) A problem driven approach to programme design moving away from knowledge for practice to knowledge in practice
  - (iii) Relocalising CPD in schools to harness the horizontal learning opportunities
  - (iv) Writing technology in the equation
- A general shift from continuous professional development( CPD) to professional learning and development (PLD) moving away the additive view of training to a a more transformative intent and outcome.

# Table of Content

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Setting up the project</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Contextual background	2
1.3	Methodology	3
1.3.1	Study design	3
1.3.2	Sampling strategy	4
1.3.3	Data collection	5
1.3.4	Method of data analysis	5
1.3.5	Ethical considerations	6
<b>2.0</b>	<b>The Literature Review</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	The idea of a profession	7
2.2	Conceptions of “professionalism” across four ages of professionalism	8
2.2.1	The preprofessional age	8
2.2.2	The age of the autonomous professional	9
2.2.3	The age of the collegial professional	9
2.2.4	The fourth age of professionalism	10
2.3	Approaches and models to continuous professional development	11
2.3.1	Typologies of CPD	13
2.3.2	Models of CPD	13
2.3.3	Evaluating CPD	16
2.4	The question of transfer	17
2.5	The influence of teacher’s beliefs on the outcomes of professional development	17
2.5.1	Self efficacy	17
2.5.2	Student outcomes	18
2.6	Individual teaching contexts and organisational support	18
2.7	Training model offered to secondary school teachers in Mauritius	19
2.8	Teacher career cycles and trajectories	19
2.9	Teacher professional needs	21
2.9.1	Career needs	23
2.9.2	Teaching, learning and curriculum needs	23
2.9.3	Leadership needs	24



2.9.4	Personal and interpersonal needs	24
2.9.5	School/ system needs	24
<b>3.0</b>	<b>The quantitative findings from survey questionnaire</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1	Participants status of employment	25
3.2	Participants' years of teaching experience	25
3.3	Participants' educational background and area of specialisation	26
3.4	Teachers' experience with CPD	28
3.5	Teacher's intentions regarding CPD	30
3.6	The nature of teachers' demand for CPD	30
3.6.1	Teachers' prioritisation of courses for CPD in suggested list	30
3.6.2	Teacher's interest for possible area of post graduate specialisation	31
3.6.3	Teacher's preferred mode for CPD	32
3.6.4	Factors influencing teachers' choices of formal CPD courses	33
3.6.5	Link between CPD choices and number of years of experience	33
3.6.5.1	Classroom management	33
3.6.5.2	Educational Technology	34
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Qualitative data analysis from questionnaires and interviews</b>	<b>35</b>
4.1	Overview	35
4.2	Classroom management	37
4.3	Indiscipline	37
4.3.1	Legal knowledge	37
4.3.2	Pedagogical knowledge	37
4.4	General schooling issues on which CPD is needed	38
4.4.1	On control and values	38
4.4.2	On motivation	39
4.4.3	On pedagogy, content and assessment	40
4.4.4	On school leadership/teachers' performance, leadership and management	41
4.4.5	On teacher performance and quality	41
4.4.6	On context of the students	41
4.5	Designing CPD	42
4.5.1	Contextualisation	42

4.5.2	On the objectives of CPD	43
4.5.3	On the pedagogy of CPD	45
4.5.4	On access to CPD	45
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Further data analysis/interpretation from interviews</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1	Previous experience of CPD at MIE	47
5.2	CPD and current challenges	49
5.3	The content of professional development courses	51
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Speaking back to the literature</b>	<b>57</b>
6.1	Enabling and inhibitive factors	57
6.2	Teachers' needs	59
6.3	A contextual take on teachers' CPD needs	60
6.3.1	Performativity needs	61
6.3.2	High needs students	62
6.3.3	Self-efficacy needs	63
6.3.4	Policy/systemic needs	64
6.3.5	Technology needs	64
6.3.6	Organisational needs	64
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Redesigning and revitalising CPD</b>	<b>65</b>
7.1	Guiding principles for CPD programme development	65
7.2	Four paradigmatic transformations	66
7.2.1	The overriding importance of the discipline of specialisation	66
7.2.2	A problem driven approach	67
7.2.3	Relocalising CPD in schools	67
7.2.4	Writing technology in the equation	67
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Concluding comments</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>70</b>





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