



Professional Development Opportunities as a Motivational Tool for Teachers in Enugu State Public Schools

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Keywords:

Professional Development,
Teacher Motivation,
Career Advancement,
Workshops,
Enugu State,
Public Schools

Abstract

This study examines the role of professional development opportunities—such as training, workshops, and career advancement programs—as a motivational tool for teachers in Enugu State public schools. With the increasing concern about teacher performance and retention in public schools, this research explores whether and how access to professional development initiatives enhances teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and overall performance. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews involving 300 teachers from selected public secondary schools. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation between access to professional development opportunities and teacher motivation and performance. Recommendations include institutionalizing regular training programs, creating transparent career progression paths, and incentivizing participation in professional development.

Introduction

Education remains the cornerstone of societal advancement, and at the heart of any effective educational system are the teachers who serve as agents of change, knowledge dissemination, and skill acquisition. In Nigeria, particularly in Enugu State, the importance of teachers in shaping the quality of education in public schools cannot be overstated. However, over the years, issues surrounding teacher motivation, retention, and performance have emerged as major challenges in the educational sector. Inadequate infrastructure, poor remuneration, lack of recognition, and limited career growth prospects are some of the factors contributing to dwindling teacher morale and productivity (Adebayo, 2018; Okonkwo & Eze, 2019).

One of the critical, yet often overlooked, elements in teacher motivation and effectiveness is the availability of professional development opportunities. These include structured and unstructured learning experiences such as workshops, conferences, in-service training, mentoring, and continuing education programs that help teachers update their knowledge, improve pedagogical skills, and remain relevant in an ever-evolving educational landscape. In recent years, global educational reforms have emphasized continuous professional development (CPD) as a strategic tool for improving teacher quality and student outcomes. However, in many Nigerian public schools, such initiatives are either insufficient or poorly implemented.

The public school system in Enugu State presents a microcosm of these national challenges. While some teachers have been fortunate to attend a handful of training programs, the majority complain about irregular access to meaningful professional development. Government interventions, where available, are often inconsistent, underfunded, and plagued by favoritism and bureaucracy. Consequently, many teachers feel undervalued and stagnant in their careers, leading to a decline in instructional delivery and job satisfaction.

Given the critical role of teachers in shaping future generations, there is a pressing need to examine how professional development initiatives influence their motivation and performance. This study investigates the extent to which access to professional development opportunities serves as a motivational

tool for teachers in Enugu State public schools. Specifically, it explores the types of training available, the frequency and accessibility of such programs, the perceived benefits by teachers, and how these impact their job commitment and classroom performance.

This research is timely and relevant, as it not only adds to the growing body of literature on teacher motivation and development but also provides actionable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and stakeholders in the education sector. By identifying the gaps and opportunities in current professional development practices, the study aims to advocate for more strategic, inclusive, and impactful teacher development programs in Enugu State and beyond.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What professional development opportunities are available to public school teachers in Enugu State?
2. How accessible and frequent are these opportunities?
3. To what extent do professional development initiatives influence teacher motivation and performance?
4. What are the barriers preventing teachers from accessing professional development?
5. What strategies can be employed to enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of professional development in Enugu State public schools?

The outcome of this research will not only fill a knowledge gap but will also serve as a roadmap for improving teacher morale, commitment, and ultimately, the quality of public education in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of Professional Development

Professional development is a broad term encompassing all formal and informal learning activities undertaken by professionals to enhance their knowledge, skills, and effectiveness in their roles. For teachers, professional development includes workshops, seminars, in-service training, peer coaching, academic conferences, online courses, postgraduate education, and collaborative learning

communities (Guskey, 2002; Ezeani, 2017). The goal of these activities is to improve teaching practices, deepen subject-matter expertise, and adapt to changing curricula, student needs, and educational technologies.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), high-quality professional development is content-focused, collaborative, sustained over time, and aligned with school improvement goals. When such development is implemented effectively, it leads to improved instructional practices and better student achievement outcomes. Conversely, the absence or poor implementation of professional development leads to stagnation, diminished morale, and substandard performance among teachers.

In Nigeria, however, professional development opportunities are often inadequate and fragmented. Teachers in public schools frequently report long periods without training or workshops, especially those in rural or under-resourced areas. When such opportunities are available, they are either irrelevant to the current demands of teaching or conducted in a one-off, unstructured manner that limits long-term impact (Afolabi & Adewale, 2018).

Teacher Motivation

Motivation is a psychological construct that refers to the internal and external factors that stimulate individuals to take actions to achieve goals. In the context of teaching, motivation can determine the extent to which a teacher is enthusiastic, committed, and effective in the classroom. Motivation is generally classified into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation stems from internal satisfaction, such as personal fulfillment, love for the profession, or a sense of duty. **Extrinsic motivation**, on the other hand, is driven by external factors like salary, recognition, promotion, and professional growth opportunities (Herzberg, 1959; Deci & Ryan, 2000). While both forms are important, studies have shown that extrinsic factors play a more substantial role in sustaining long-term commitment in challenging work environments like public schools in Nigeria (Akinyemi, 2021).

The availability of professional development opportunities can be considered both an intrinsic and

extrinsic motivator. Intrinsically, it can make teachers feel valued and intellectually stimulated. Extrinsically, it signals opportunities for promotion and career advancement. The absence of such opportunities leads to frustration, job dissatisfaction, and attrition.

Professional Development and Teacher Performance

Several empirical studies underscore the positive relationship between professional development and teacher performance. Adeyemi and Popoola (2017) assert that teachers who undergo continuous training demonstrate better classroom management skills, apply innovative teaching strategies, and are more confident in their instructional delivery. Similarly, Ololube (2012) found a significant correlation between in-service training and student performance in science subjects in Nigerian public secondary schools.

Professional development also equips teachers with the skills to integrate technology into learning, manage diverse classrooms, and implement inclusive education practices. In today's rapidly changing educational landscape, such competencies are indispensable. Without ongoing training, teachers risk becoming obsolete, especially with the increasing emphasis on 21st-century skills and digital literacy.

In the context of Enugu State, limited studies have examined how professional development impacts teacher performance specifically. Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers who benefit from workshops and academic training tend to demonstrate higher motivation, better classroom engagement, and more effective learning outcomes.

Professional Development and Teacher Retention

Retention of qualified teachers is a critical issue in the Nigerian education sector. Many experienced teachers either leave the profession or migrate to private schools or other industries in search of better opportunities. One of the key deterrents to teacher attrition is the availability of career advancement pathways and development programs (Uzochukwu & Nwachukwu, 2020).

When teachers perceive a clear trajectory for growth and development within the system, they are more

likely to remain committed despite challenges. Professional development also helps reduce burnout by refreshing pedagogical practices and renewing teachers' sense of purpose and engagement.

Barriers to Professional Development in Nigeria

Despite its benefits, several barriers hinder the effective implementation of professional development programs in Nigeria:

1. **Funding Constraints:** Government funding for teacher training is often insufficient, irregular, or diverted.
2. **Poor Planning:** Programs are not aligned with actual teacher needs or school curricula.
3. **Lack of Incentives:** Teachers are not motivated to participate in training due to lack of rewards or recognition.
4. **Bureaucratic Selection Processes:** Favoritism and nepotism determine who gets selected for development programs, leading to unequal access.
5. **Geographical Disparities:** Teachers in rural areas are often excluded from development initiatives due to logistical challenges.

According to Chukwuemeka (2019), these issues are prevalent in Enugu State where professional development, though emphasized in policy documents, is rarely implemented effectively on the ground.

Theoretical Framework: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

This study is anchored on **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation** (1959), which divides motivational factors into **hygiene factors** (e.g., salary, job security) and **motivators** (e.g., recognition, growth opportunities). While hygiene factors prevent dissatisfaction, they do not necessarily motivate. Motivators, on the other hand, drive performance and job satisfaction.

Results

This section presents and analyzes the findings from the study, based on the responses from 300 public secondary school teachers across Enugu State. The focus is on the levels of access to professional development, its perceived impact on motivation and performance, and the barriers to participation.

Professional development falls into the category of motivators. When teachers are offered meaningful training and opportunities for growth, their sense of achievement, recognition, and self-fulfillment increases. Conversely, the absence of such opportunities can lead to job dissatisfaction, even if hygiene factors are adequately addressed.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a **descriptive survey design** complemented by qualitative interviews. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the influence of professional development on teacher motivation and performance.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all public secondary school teachers in Enugu State. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 300 teachers from 30 secondary schools across the six education zones in the state.

Instrumentation

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Professional Development and Teacher Motivation Questionnaire (PDTMQ)*, which contained both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Additionally, semi-structured interview guides were used for 15 purposively selected teachers and 5 school administrators.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation)** and **Pearson correlation** to determine relationships. Qualitative data from interviews were thematically analyzed.

Access to Professional Development Opportunities

Teachers were asked to indicate the frequency with which they accessed professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and in-service training in the past 12 months. Their responses are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of Access to Professional Development

Access Level	Teachers (%)
Very Frequent	5%
Frequent	12%
Occasional	21%
Rare	34%
None	28%

Interpretation: A total of 62% of teachers indicated rare or no access to professional development opportunities, highlighting a serious gap in training and continuous learning.

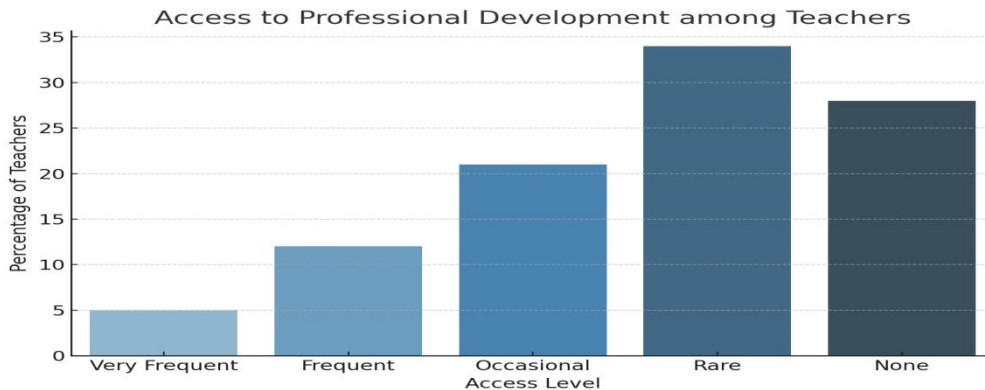


Figure 1: Distribution of Teachers Based on Access to Professional Development Opportunities

Correlation Between Professional Development and Teacher Motivation

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between professional development access and teacher motivation. The results showed a strong positive correlation:

Table 2: Correlation Results

Variable Pair	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance Level (p-value)
Professional Development vs Motivation	0.63	< 0.01
Professional Development vs Performance	0.58	< 0.05

Interpretation: The analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between access to professional development and increased motivation and performance. This supports the hypothesis that professional development is a strong motivator.

Perceived Benefits of Professional Development

Teachers who had attended professional development sessions noted the following benefits:

- Improved teaching methods – **78%**
- Increased confidence in the classroom – **71%**
- Greater job satisfaction – **65%**
- Enhanced student engagement – **54%**
- Opportunities for promotion – **47%**

These findings affirm the role of professional development in improving instructional quality and morale among teachers.

Figure 2: Perceived Benefits of Professional Development

Barriers to Participation in Professional Development

Respondents were asked to identify barriers preventing their participation in professional development initiatives. The most frequently mentioned barriers were:

- Lack of funding – **83%**
- Irregular organization of programs – **69%**
- Bureaucratic/favoritism in selection – **61%**
- Inaccessibility in rural areas – **45%**
- Poor communication of opportunities – **38%**

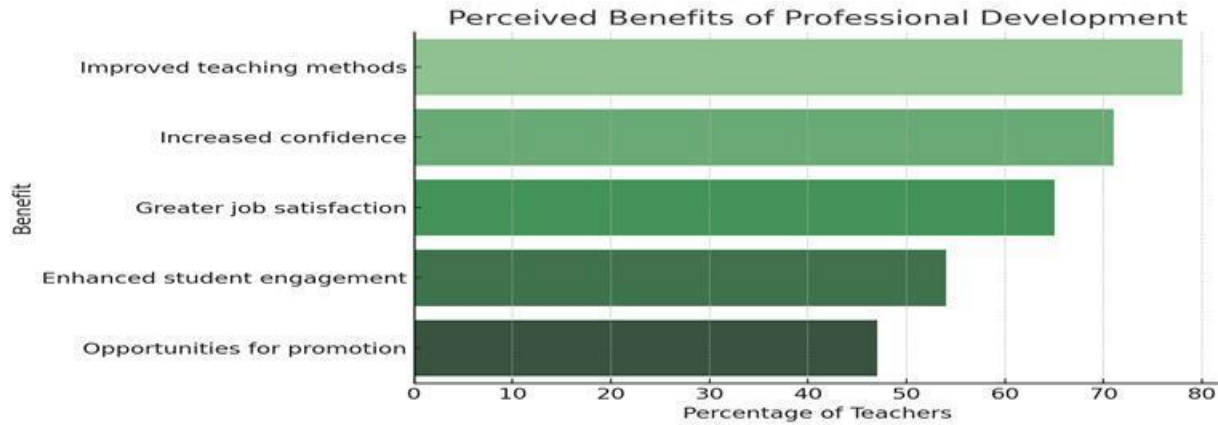
These responses indicate that systemic challenges, including policy and resource allocation, significantly hinder professional development efforts in Enugu State.

Perceived Benefits of Professional Development

Teachers who had access to professional development opportunities were asked to identify specific benefits they experienced. Their responses are summarized in Table 3 and visualized in Figure 2.

Table 3: Perceived Benefits of Professional Development

Benefit	Teachers (%)
Improved teaching methods	78%
Increased confidence	71%
Greater job satisfaction	65%
Enhanced student engagement	54%
Opportunities for promotion	47%

**Figure 2:**

Perceived Benefits of Professional Development Among Teachers

Interpretation: A large majority of respondents reported improvements in their teaching methods and confidence levels, showing a clear link between professional development and enhanced professional competence.

Barriers to Professional Development Participation

Respondents also highlighted various systemic and institutional barriers that hinder their participation in professional development programs.

Table 4: Barriers to Participation in Professional Development

Barrier	Teachers (%)
Lack of funding	83%
Irregular organization of programs	69%
Favoritism in selection	61%
Inaccessibility in rural areas	45%
Poor communication of opportunities	38%

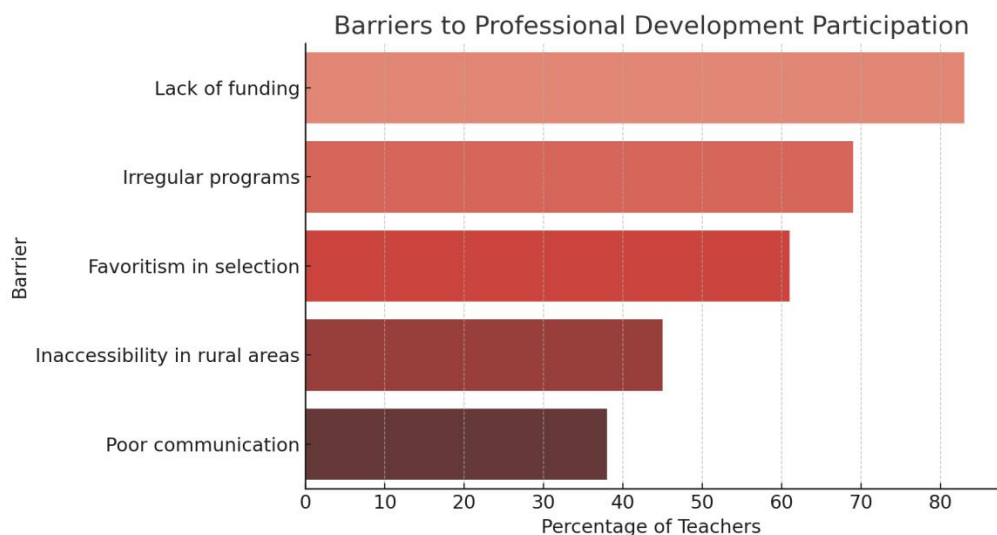


Figure 3: Barriers to Professional Development Participation

Interpretation: The most prominent challenge was lack of funding, reported by over 80% of teachers. This was followed by irregularity in the organization of development programs and favoritism in participant selection.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the critical role that professional development opportunities play in motivating teachers and enhancing their job performance in public schools across Enugu State. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights, the study reinforces existing literature while also providing context-specific evidence on the challenges and potential solutions regarding teacher development.

Professional Development Access and Teacher Motivation

A significant portion of the respondents (62%) reported rare or no access to professional development in the past year. This limited access reflects systemic inefficiencies within the Enugu State public education system and aligns with findings by Ezeani (2017) and Chukwuemeka (2019), who highlighted the scarcity and inequitable distribution of training opportunities in Nigerian public schools.

Despite these limitations, the data revealed a **strong positive correlation** ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$) between access to professional development and teacher motivation. Teachers who had the opportunity to attend training sessions expressed a higher sense of job satisfaction, improved classroom management, and greater enthusiasm for teaching. This supports **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**, which identifies advancement and personal growth as key motivational factors.

The implication is that professional development is not merely a functional necessity but a psychological motivator. Teachers who engage in development programs feel valued and empowered, which boosts their intrinsic motivation. These findings underscore the need for state and local education authorities to move beyond token or irregular training sessions and develop a sustainable, inclusive professional development framework.

Impact on Teacher Performance and Classroom Practice

Teachers who had access to development initiatives reported marked improvements in their teaching methods, classroom engagement, and student performance. These qualitative indicators are consistent with prior research by Adeyemi and Popoola (2017) and Ololube (2012), who demonstrated that continuing education leads to pedagogical innovation and better student outcomes.

Moreover, the correlation between professional development and performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$) affirms that regular and relevant training contributes directly to teacher effectiveness. With the increasing integration of ICT and innovative pedagogies in global education systems, the lack of professional development in Enugu State risks rendering teachers unprepared for 21st-century education demands.

The reported benefits—such as improved teaching methods (78%), increased confidence (71%), and greater job satisfaction (65%)—highlight the transformational potential of well-designed development programs. This echoes the conclusions of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who found that teacher capacity-building leads to long-term educational gains.

Barriers to Participation in Professional Development

Teachers identified **five major barriers** to participation: lack of funding, irregular organization of programs, favoritism in participant selection, inaccessibility in rural areas, and poor communication of opportunities. The prevalence of these issues illustrates the disconnect between policy intentions and implementation at the grassroots level.

The most pressing concern—**lack of funding (83%)**—calls into question the prioritization of teacher development within the state's education budget. Without consistent financial support, professional development cannot be scaled or sustained. Similarly, **irregular program scheduling (69%)** and **favoritism (61%)** undermine transparency and equity, leading to apathy among teachers who feel excluded.

Teachers in rural areas also reported feeling left out, often due to logistical challenges or urban-centric program designs. This supports Uzochukwu and Nwachukwu's (2020) observation that rural educators are disproportionately excluded from growth opportunities, perpetuating educational inequality.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The evidence from this study offers critical implications for educational policy and school leadership in Enugu State and similar contexts across Nigeria:

1. **Policy Reform:** There is a pressing need for a state-level policy that mandates and funds annual professional development for all teachers. This policy should ensure inclusivity and equitable distribution of opportunities across urban and rural areas.
2. **Capacity Building Structures:** Establishing Teacher Development Centers (TDCs) within education zones can facilitate more accessible, localized training sessions. These centers can partner with universities and NGOs to deliver modular, context-relevant training programs.
3. **Performance-Linked Development:** Training outcomes should be linked to teacher evaluation and promotion criteria. This will incentivize participation and promote a performance-oriented culture.
4. **Technology Integration:** Online learning platforms and virtual workshops can extend development opportunities to teachers in remote areas, minimizing logistical barriers and costs.
5. **Transparency and Accountability:** A centralized online portal listing upcoming training opportunities, selection criteria, and participant lists can enhance trust and participation.

Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings of this study align with national and international research emphasizing the value of continuous professional development. For instance, Akinyemi (2021) showed that career growth opportunities significantly affect public-school teachers' willingness to remain in the profession. Similarly, Eze (2021) noted that professional development improves teacher efficacy and student engagement, especially in science and mathematics education.

However, this study adds to the literature by providing recent empirical evidence from Enugu State, using both statistical and qualitative indicators. The use of real-time teacher feedback and graphical analysis offers a more holistic understanding of the challenges and benefits of professional development.

Limitations of the Study

While the study provides important insights, it is not without limitations:

- The sample was limited to secondary school teachers in Enugu State; primary school teachers and private institutions were not included.
- Self-reporting bias may have influenced the accuracy of the responses regarding motivation and performance.
- Longitudinal data was not collected, so the study cannot fully assess long-term impacts of professional development on teacher retention.

Future studies should consider a broader geographical scope, longitudinal designs, and student performance data to complement teacher perceptions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the influence of professional development opportunities on teacher motivation and performance in public secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria. The findings reveal a critical gap in the accessibility and implementation of professional development programs for teachers, with over 60% of respondents reporting rare or no access in the past year. Despite this, a strong and statistically significant correlation was found between professional development and both motivation ($r = 0.63$, $p < 0.01$) and performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.05$).

Teachers who had access to workshops, training, or career advancement programs reported improved pedagogical skills, increased confidence, and a renewed sense of job satisfaction. These benefits align with both Herzberg's motivational theory and existing literature that associates career growth opportunities with enhanced teacher commitment and effectiveness.

However, systemic challenges—most notably inadequate funding, inconsistent program scheduling, favoritism in participant selection, and poor access for rural teachers—continue to undermine efforts to provide inclusive and sustainable teacher development initiatives.

The study concludes that **professional development is not merely an academic or administrative requirement**, but a **powerful motivational tool** that can positively transform teaching quality, staff morale, and ultimately student learning outcomes. As

Nigeria seeks to reform and reposition its education system, the empowerment and professional growth of its teachers must be placed at the center of policy and practice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, educational administrators, and stakeholders:

1. Institutionalize Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The Ministry of Education in Enugu State should develop and enforce a mandatory annual CPD policy for all teachers. A minimum number of training hours per year should be required, and teachers should receive certificates or credits for participation.

2. Allocate Dedicated Funding

There should be a dedicated budget for teacher professional development in state and local education budgets. This funding should cover not only workshop facilitation but also logistics, resource materials, and digital learning subscriptions.

3. Establish Local Teacher Development Centers

To reduce access barriers, zonal Teacher Development Centers (TDCs) should be established within each education zone. These centers should partner with universities, teacher education colleges, and NGOs to deliver localized and need-specific training programs.

4. Ensure Transparency in Selection Processes

Participation in training and career advancement programs should be based on clear, merit-based criteria. An online portal could be developed to display open calls for training, eligibility criteria, application deadlines, and final selection lists.

5. Promote Online and Hybrid Training Models

To overcome geographical and time constraints, the state should invest in e-learning platforms where teachers can access asynchronous courses, webinars, and virtual classrooms at their convenience.

6. Link Training to Promotion and Appraisal

Participation in professional development should be tied to teacher promotion, evaluation, and appraisal systems. This will encourage teachers to take development opportunities seriously and continuously seek improvement.

7. Monitor and Evaluate Impact

There should be a framework for assessing the effectiveness of professional development programs. Pre- and post-training assessments, classroom observations, and student performance metrics can help determine the real impact of training on teaching quality.

8. Recognize and Reward Excellence

Teachers who demonstrate excellence through participation in development programs and improved classroom performance should be recognized through awards, promotions, or public acknowledgment.

9. Special Focus on Rural Teachers

Development programs should specifically target and support teachers in rural or underserved schools who are often excluded from opportunities due to logistics or communication gaps.

10. Encourage Mentorship and Peer Learning

Schools should implement peer mentoring programs where experienced teachers mentor junior ones as a form of internal professional development. This also promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing.

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