

NGO Capacity Building Initiatives: Impacts and Constraints in Enhancing Teachers' Competence for Managing Learning Environments in Tanzanian Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design to investigate capacity-building programmes (CBPs) provided by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) in Tanzanian public secondary schools. Specifically, the study focused on the NGOs' initiatives, impacts, and constraints towards enhancing teachers' competence in managing the learning environment. In-depth interviews and focused group discussions were used to collect data from 50 teachers. The findings revealed that the CBPs improved teachers' competence in designing and organising physical learning spaces, cultivating positive classroom relationships, and leveraging information and communication technology to enrich the learning environment. However, the programmes were constrained by a short duration of delivery and a lack of continued support. The study recommends the adoption of appropriate interventions by NGOs and the government to ensure the sustainability of NGO-supported capacity-building programmes, thereby fostering lasting impacts on teachers' capacity to manage the learning environment in public secondary schools.

Keywords: *Capacity building, non-state actors, professional development, classroom management*

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Introduction

The classroom learning environment plays a critical role in shaping students' learning outcomes, including academic performance and motivation to engage effectively in the teaching and learning process (Closs et al., 2022; Shamaki, 2015). Research on the learning environment shows that students are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours when they are exposed to a positive and supportive

learning environment (Meuser et al., 2022; Ozerem & Akkoyunlu, 2015). On the contrary, exposure to ineffective learning environments, including those characterised by inadequate resources, poorly designed physical spaces, and negative teacher-student relationships, has been associated with a range of detrimental learning outcomes, such as decreased motivation and behavioural issues like aggression, defiance, and absenteeism (Godson & Ngussa, 2020). Accordingly, the influence of the learning environment towards learning has also been noted as pivotal because students spend a substantial amount of time immersed in it compared to any other component in the learning process (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019).

Learning environment refers to the physical, social, and psychological conditions in which learning takes place (Rusticus et al., 2023). It includes the setting where learning takes place, such as classrooms and the various learning equipment and instructional materials involved in the learning process. It also encompasses the teacher-student relationships and classroom interactions that characterise and facilitate learning and enhance the educational experience for students (Oblinger, 2006). Given the importance attached to the learning environment as well as the complexity involved in managing modern classrooms, teachers' ability to manage the classroom environment effectively has been conceived as one of the fundamental factors that contribute to meaningful and effective learning (Korb et al., 2016; Pesambili et al., 2022). With classrooms becoming increasingly diverse and dynamic, teachers require relevant and up-to-date skills to cultivate a positive and engaging learning environment that addresses the unique needs of all students (Closs et al., 2022).

However, while considerable efforts have been made to enhance the standards of physical learning environments, such as the designs, quantity, and quality of learning facilities, evidence suggests that minimal attention has been given to the internal dynamics of classrooms, particularly how classroom learning environments are prepared, organised, and managed (Lackney, 2008; Pesambili et al., 2022). Ultimately, it has fallen upon teachers to undertake such crucial functions as determining appropriate classroom layouts and fostering positive classroom relationships that promote feelings of safety and encourage student participation (Malik & Rizvi, 2018; Monteiro et al., 2021). While initial teacher training programmes are known to nurture these competencies and prepare teachers for such roles, the literature suggests that continuous capacity building is necessary to enable teachers to accommodate the evolving and complex demands presented by today's classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2017; Kim et al., 2019; Pesambili et al., 2022).

Ongoing capacity building for teachers in Tanzania

In Tanzania, the provision of ongoing capacity building is guided by the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, the Education and Training Policy (ETP) of 2014 and the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP) of 2017-2022. The implementation of the Teacher Development Management Strategy (TDMS) further exemplifies the government's commitment to maintaining the quality of teachers in the country. One of the key objectives of the TDMS was to provide continuous professional development for teachers at all levels (URT, 2017). However, despite the existence of these frameworks, evidence suggests that a significant number of teachers in Tanzania have not been adequately exposed to meaningful capacity development. For instance, a 2020 report by the Controller and Auditor General on the management of capacity building provision for in-service teachers reveals that only 14,540 (18%) teachers had access to various professional development programmes in the year 2018/2019, out of a total of 79,933 public secondary school teachers. At the same time, many CBPs provided to in-service teachers have been reported as incomplete and failing to address important professional needs, particularly in relation to student classroom management (Komba & Mwakabenga, 2020; URT, 2020). This lack of effective capacity building has led to numerous teachers encountering challenges in establishing effective learning environments for their students. This leads to consistently poor learning outcomes, particularly in public schools where CBPs are often scarce and of low quality (Komba, 2017; Majani, 2020).

NGOs and capacity-building initiatives

Globally, the task of providing ongoing capacity-building programmes for education practitioners such as teachers has traditionally been regarded as a responsibility of governments and their institutions, as well as other non-state actors such as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) (LaRocque & Lee, 2011). However, due to the limited resources of many governments, particularly in developing nations, and the need to ensure effective implementation of NGO projects, NGOs have increasingly assumed significant responsibilities in providing capacity building to public workers (Ulleberg, 2009). Furthermore, as noted by the International NGO Training and Research Centre (2006) and Sen (2006), the increase of NGO involvement in capacity building has been encouraged by the current donor-centred approaches that emphasise the importance of strengthening the state and its institutions. This follows several decades of downsizing the public sector through neoliberal policies. Consequently, NGOs are compelled, both by the conditions set forth by donors and current global development policies, to engage in a variety of capacity-building processes aimed at promoting local ownership of NGO programmes and strengthening the capacity of state institutions and their workforce (Dietrich, 2016; Griffin & Judge, 2010).

While NGOs have pursued various themes in their capacity-building initiatives for teachers, the literature suggests that some prioritised areas have included subject content, pedagogy, classroom management, and policy engagement (Aziz, 2020; Ulleberg, 2009). Additionally, with recent advancements in technology, there has been a growing emphasis on capacity building related to information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate the effective management of technologically rich classrooms and the integration of ICT into the teaching process. Nevertheless, despite the consistent objectives and themes covered by NGO-supported CBPs, NGOs have demonstrated varying approaches and methods in their capacity-building delivery. For instance, certain NGOs have favoured seminars, workshops and other forms of brief training sessions, considering their efficiency in terms of time and cost. In contrast, other organisations have embraced more extensive approaches, such as peer learning, study tours, and organisational mentoring and coaching, which offer a more comprehensive and in-depth experience (Groenendijk, 2010; Langmann et al., 2023).

Numerous studies conducted globally have highlighted the significance and impact of NGO capacity-building programmes (CBPs) on enhancing teachers' competencies across various domains. For example, a study conducted by Kieu and Singer (2017) in Vietnam found that training courses provided by NGOs were crucial to enhancing teachers' understanding of education for sustainable development. In Rwanda, Hatari and Mulyungi's study (2020) found that NGO-driven capacity-building initiatives improved teachers' comprehension and implementation of girl-based education programmes. Moreover, they addressed important skill gaps by strengthening teachers' capacity in areas that were often overlooked or received insufficient attention from the government and other stakeholders. However, despite these valuable findings, there remains a lack of research regarding NGO capacity-building initiatives, particularly their impact and the constraints they face in enhancing teachers' competence in managing learning environments in Tanzania. Seemingly, the CBPs provided by NGOs have not received adequate attention despite their potential for improving the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the current study sought to bridge this gap. Specifically, the study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To identify the types of CBPs offered by NGOs to public secondary school teachers in Tanzania.
- ii. To assess the competencies acquired by teachers from the CBPs in relation to managing classroom learning environments.
- iii. To explore the constraints limiting the effectiveness of these CBPs.

Methodology

Research approach and design

This study was a qualitative inquiry that aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of respondents' knowledge and experiences regarding the CBPs provided by NGOs, particularly their initiatives, impacts and constraints in enhancing teachers' management of classroom learning environment. A qualitative approach was thus adopted because it was considered more appropriate for gaining detailed information, which was crucial for addressing research objectives. Accordingly, the study employed a case study design, which was justified by the presence of a strong case and the need for an in-depth exploration of the perspectives and experiences of research participants. In this regard, Kinondoni Municipal Council within the Dar es Salaam region was selected because it contained the largest population of NGOs involved in education compared to other councils in the country. According to the statistics provided by the National Council of NGOs (NaCONGO), approximately 17.8% of all registered NGOs in the country operate within this council (NaCONGO, 2018).

Sample and sampling procedures

Data for this study was collected from a sample of five secondary schools, which were identified by DEO and WEOs as being involved or having previously been involved in NGO CBPs. The selection of secondary schools was based on the fact that there are relatively few studies focusing on NGO initiatives for such schools. Additionally, literature indicated that secondary school teachers often faced challenges in managing classroom learning environments due to the presence of more diverse learning needs among students and poor classroom management skills (Mohamed & Kimaro, 2019; Yonas et al., 2023). The sample size for study participants consisted of 50 secondary school teachers. Consistent with Alele and Malau-Aduli (2023), this number was deemed appropriate to reach data saturation while ensuring in-depth engagement with participants through one-on-one interviews and focus group discussions. To obtain a sample from the target population, a purposive sampling procedure was used to select ten teachers from each of the five schools. The selection process considered teachers with sufficient knowledge and experience of NGO CBPs. In this regard, only teachers who had participated in the CBPs provided by NGOs were included in the sample, as these were perceived to have valuable perspectives and experiences to offer regarding the CBPs under study. Heads of schools, deputy heads of schools, and academic masters/mistresses of each sampled school were involved in identifying teachers who met the identified selection criteria.

Data collection methods

Data in this study was collected through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions. These instruments were pretested in two schools prior to the data collection process. This led to a revision of the wording, logical flow and order of questions to ensure that the questions were clear, unambiguous and understood by participants as intended (Also see Pesambili, 2021; Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2024). In-depth interview sessions lasted for about 30 to 60 minutes, during which the researcher employed an interview guide to facilitate structured and focused conversations. The interview guide consisted of a set of predetermined questions and prompts that were designed to elicit detailed information about the teachers' knowledge, experiences, and perspectives regarding the CBPs provided by NGOs, their initiatives, impact and constraints in enhancing teachers' management of classroom learning environment.

On the other hand, focused group discussions involving teachers from each school were also conducted to further validate and triangulate the findings obtained from individual interviews (cf. Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018). The FGDs involved open-ended questions, which allowed participants to provide detailed explanations (cf. Pesambili, 2013; Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018). The length of the FGDs was between 45-60 minutes. This provided sufficient opportunity for each participant to speak.

Data analysis

The six-phase process of thematic analysis was adopted by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the collected data. In the first stage, each interview recording was repeatedly listened to before engaging in the transcription process. Once the transcription of all interviews was complete, each transcript was read numerous times to identify initial trends in the data. The second stage of analysis involved coding each segment of data that was relevant to or captured something interesting about the research questions. Thus, data were coded for common words and phrases that conveyed key concepts or patterns. In the third stage, the coded data were reviewed and analysed to identify shared meanings among different codes, which were then combined to form themes or sub-themes. During the fourth stage, the themes were scrutinised and improved to ensure that they were coherent, meaningful, and accurately reflected in the data. This process involved examining the themes for clear boundaries, as well as ensuring that there was sufficient data to support each theme and sub-theme. In the fifth and sixth stages, the study's thematic framework was analysed in detail to ensure that all themes that were found formed a coherent narrative that was adequately informative and consistent with the content of the dataset. Data extracts from the identified themes were then reported in an analytical manner. This involved presenting what the participants said and contextualising the interpretation in relation to the available literature.

Ethical considerations

The data collection process conducted in this study adhered to ethical guidelines and regulations provided by the University of Dar es Salaam. A research clearance introducing the principal researcher to conduct the study in relevant regional and municipal authorities was secured from the University. Informed consent was sought from all participants prior to their involvement in the study. To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, in-depth interviews and FGD sessions were conducted in settings where participants' identities and responses could be safely protected. During the data presentation and analysis stage, measures were also taken to protect participants' privacy and identities by assigning them pseudonyms (cf. Pesambili, 2013; Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018). As the final report was prepared, the researchers ensured that all identifiers had been replaced with pseudonyms.

Findings and Discussion

Types of CBPs offered by NGOs to public secondary school teachers in Tanzania

This objective sought to investigate the diverse types of CBPs offered by NGOs to public secondary teachers in Tanzania. The converging position of all teachers interviewed for this study was that NGOs provided various kinds of CBPs to teachers in public secondary schools. Teachers emphasised that the provision of diverse CBPs was an important initiative undertaken by NGOs to facilitate the effective implementation of NGO-supported projects and to encourage ownership of such initiatives at the grassroots level. Nevertheless, findings indicated that three types of CBPs were provided by NGOs, namely: in-class training, mentoring and coaching, and provision of capacity-building resources:

In class training

The results of the interviews indicated that in-class training was among the prevalent CBPs offered by NGOs. It was found that many of the programmes implemented by NGOs in public schools involved exposing teachers to various forms of in-class training to enhance their skills in diverse aspects related to teaching and learning. Citing seminar sessions conducted by NGOs, teachers disclosed that such kinds of in-class training were conducted on school premises or at selected training centres. They were also frequently delivered in collaboration with local educational authorities and higher education institutions, including universities. Describing the prevalence and nature of seminars offered by NGOs TE-7 noted as follows:

NGOs provide numerous seminars to teachers. I have personally attended two seminars organised by NGOs this year. Often, NGOs

deliver these seminars with the assistance of municipal education officers. Occasionally, lecturers from different universities are also involved (Interview with TE-7/School D).

Based on this finding, NGOs should consider in-class training, particularly seminars, as an effective and valuable approach to support teacher capacity building. The teacher's personal experience of attending two seminars organised by NGOs indicates that these training initiatives are accessible to a substantial number of teachers. This implies that NGOs are making efforts to reach a wide range of teachers and contribute to their professional development. The involvement of municipal education officers and university lecturers further indicates the collaborative nature of NGO in-class training, which is likely to have an impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of the CBPs. This concurs with substantial literature, which indicates that in the efforts to improve the impact and efficacy of their capacity-building initiatives, NGOs often partner with local institutions and government authorities (Ulleberg, 2009).

In addition to seminars, NGOs conducted workshops as part of their in-class training programmes. As opposed to seminars, workshops were found to provide a more hands-on and interactive approach to capacity building. For many teachers, workshops were mentioned as platforms where they could actively engage in practical exercises, collaborate with peers, and apply new concepts in real-time classroom scenarios. TE-4 provided the following experience regarding workshops organised by NGOs:

I have attended many workshops organised by NGOs. These workshops have enabled me to learn innovative teaching strategies and practice them in a classroom-like environment. They have also provided me with the opportunity to experiment with different instructional methods, receive feedback from other teachers, and reflect on how to adapt those strategies to suit my students' needs (Interview with TE-4/School B).

This quote shows that NGOs exposed teachers to workshops as part of their CBPs. The hands-on nature of these workshops provided teachers with the opportunity to practice these strategies in a simulated classroom environment, allowing them to gain confidence and proficiency in their application. This is in line with Liu (2022) and Shuster et al. (2020), who concur that workshops are effective tools for teachers' capacity building due to their practical nature. Consistent with the findings, workshops also facilitated collaboration among teachers as teachers had the chance to work together, exchange ideas, and share their experiences and challenges. Considering that the majority of teachers in public secondary schools in Tanzania do not have sufficient opportunities to meet and interact with their

peers and other education professionals, NGO workshops thus play a critical role in filling this gap by providing teachers with a platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and exchange of best practices.

Mentoring and coaching

The study found that this was another type of CBP provided by NGOs to public secondary school teachers. Findings indicated that such programmes were frequently implemented after in-class training to reinforce and consolidate skills teachers obtained from the programmes. However, unlike in-class training programmes, which were often brief and one-time events, NGOs' mentoring and coaching programmes were unveiled as ongoing and longer-term efforts that allowed for more sustained support and skill development. They were also conducted in school settings, which allowed NGO mentors to provide timely and contextualised support tied directly to the teachers' concrete experiences and needs in their own classrooms. Elaborating on NGO mentoring and coaching, TE-1 noted the following during FDG:

Attending seminars alone has not been effective in enabling us to apply the skills acquired during the training due to the unique challenges we encounter in the classroom environment. Therefore, using their experienced mentors, NGOs have also been implementing mentoring and coaching programmes in order to provide us with tailored guidance and help us to gradually build confidence in applying the new strategies (FGD with teachers from school C).

The teacher's response suggests that NGO mentoring and coaching programs offered valuable ongoing support to teachers, which facilitated their gradual skill development. Although the study's findings revealed that these programmes were not frequent, teachers admitted that the inclusion of experienced mentors in such programmes helped them build confidence. Compared to seminars and workshops, teachers acknowledged that ongoing mentoring was crucial in assisting them to apply new strategies and consolidate their skills. This aligns with a substantial body of literature that emphasises the limited efficacy of standalone capacity-building initiatives such as seminars and workshops in transforming teachers' instructional practices. This is because such initiatives often lack the necessary time for rigorous and cumulative learning and are generally insufficient on their own (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Pesambili et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2009). This implies that the provision of mentoring and coaching programmes by NGOs enhances the effectiveness of capacity-building initiatives by addressing the limitations associated with standalone seminars and workshops.

Provision of capacity-building resources

The study findings revealed that NGOs provided various types of capacity-building resources as part of their teacher capacity-building initiatives. Among the resources mentioned were professional development workbooks, teacher guides, teaching manuals, and instructional technology resources, including instructional software programmes and online courses. When elaborating on the significance of such resources for their capacity building, teachers reported that the materials addressed real issues teachers encountered in the classroom. Accordingly, they noted that the resources refreshed their knowledge of topics they had forgotten and aspects they deemed unimportant. TE-2 narrated the following:

NGOs provide us with various resources to enhance our teaching capacity. The materials have proven to be extremely valuable to us as they serve as reminders of important aspects of the teaching profession, including those we take for granted and those we have forgotten. We have been utilising these materials as guides to inform our day-to-day teaching activities (Interview with TE-2/School B).

The fact that teachers utilised capacity-building resources provided by NGOs to guide their day-to-day teaching suggests that they attach considerable importance to such resources for enhancing their teaching skills. This aligns with extensive research highlighting the role of resources in informing teachers' practice and promoting their professional growth (Hrastinski, 2021; Reimers et al., 2020). Regarding the use of resources to refresh and update teachers' knowledge of essential practices that may have faded over time or been neglected, studies confirm that professional development resources can counteract attrition of teacher knowledge and skills by reintroducing key concepts and strategies (Hennessy et al., 2018). Given that developing countries like Tanzania continue to face inadequate professional development resources for teachers, well-designed capacity-building resources provided by NGOs have the potential to make a significant impact towards teachers' management of the classroom learning environment. This is especially the case if they incorporate elements shown to define effective professional learning, such as an emphasis on content, engaging activities and coherence with educational goals (URT, 2020).

Competencies acquired by teachers from the CBPs in relation to managing classroom learning environments

Under this theme, the findings indicated that the programmes enhanced teachers' competence in three areas, as presented below:

Designing and organising physical learning spaces

The study found that teachers gained important knowledge and skills from the CBPs to enable them to effectively design and organise physical learning spaces within classrooms in ways that promote student participation, creativity and conceptual understanding. Teachers reported that prior to being exposed to the CBPs, they primarily relied on traditional classroom layouts featuring straight rows of student chairs and tables facing the teacher in front of the room. They also relied extensively on the chalkboard as the main instructional tool. However, following exposure to the programmes, teachers revealed that they learned how to strategically select and position displays, decorations, and materials to create a positive and engaging environment that sparks students' interests. They also gained the ability to arrange classroom furniture in ways that facilitated a variety of teaching methods. TE-8 described the skills gained from the CBPs, stating the following:

The NGO seminar taught us how to organise classroom seating arrangements in ways that may influence students to engage more in the lesson. We learned about the importance of arranging students' furniture in round configurations to promote discussion and collaboration among students. We were encouraged to experiment with different adaptive seating arrangements like clusters and U-shapes to suit specific lessons and accommodate a range of teaching methods (Interview with TE-8/School C).

This statement reflects the challenges teachers face in designing and organising learning spaces when they lack frequent exposure to capacity-building initiatives. Research indicates that traditional didactic instruction has dominated classroom practice for decades, leaving teachers unprepared for flexible spaces that foster active learning (Mpho, 2018). Without adequate training, many teachers resort to traditional and personalised teaching methods characterised by overreliance on traditional classroom setups and underutilisation of diverse instructional tools. However, consistent with the findings, previous studies indicate a positive correlation between teacher capacity-building opportunities and the adoption of innovative instructional practices and flexible learning environments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hennessy et al., 2018). This suggests that CBPs offered by NGOs provide teachers with an opportunity to transform their perspectives and practices with regard to the design and organisation of learning spaces by challenging their conventional views of learning space as a static environment and introducing alternative arrangements.

Development of positive classroom relationships

Findings indicated that teachers' knowledge and attitudes in fostering classroom relationships were enhanced because of the exposure to NGO-based CBPs. Teachers

stated that although they understood the importance of classroom relationships in facilitating student learning, many of them had not devoted sufficient effort and time to put this concept into practice. Instead, they acknowledged that their focus had primarily been on instructional activities, which they perceived as their main role in the classroom. However, through participating in the CBPs organised by NGOs, particularly mentoring and coaching programmes, teachers reported taking on a more proactive role in fostering and cultivating positive classroom relationships. In fact, most of the teachers indicated that the knowledge, skills and attitudes they gained from the CBPs empowered them to overcome what they had previously viewed as insurmountable obstacles, such as time constraints and fixed mindsets. TE-10 noted the following regarding this issue:

I always understood the importance of students' relationships for learning, but my teaching duties limited the efforts and time I could dedicate to this aspect. However, with the guidance and mentorship from NGO officials, I have been making efforts to provide my students opportunities to build relationships with each other by giving them more group work and encouraging collaborative learning activities (Interview with TE-10/School A).

The presence of positive classroom relationships, characterised by strong and supportive connections between teachers and students, as well as among students, is crucial for effective learning. Positive classroom relationships play a critical role in creating effective psychosocial learning environments (Baars et al., 2021; Cornelius-White, 2007). It has been noted that teachers who establish strong, positive relationships can foster a safe and trusting environment that promotes student engagement and motivation (Allen et al., 2018; Alderman & Green, 2011). Nevertheless, the given statement indicates that teachers need exposure to continuous capacity building in order to build and sustain meaningful classroom relationships effectively. This aligns well with prior research, which suggests that coaching and mentoring are instrumental in helping teachers acquire the competencies and appreciate the significance of cultivating interpersonal connections and interactions within the classroom (Collet, 2015). The finding suggests that NGO-based mentoring and coaching programmes could serve as an effective capacity-building practice for teachers to enhance their ability to maintain positive classroom relationships.

Utilising ICT to enrich the classroom environment

Another competence that teachers gained from the CBPs relates to the use of ICT to enrich the classroom environment. This understanding came out when teachers were elaborating on the content of ICT-related training that was regularly conducted by NGOs. Describing the impact of the training on their teaching practice, teachers noted that the programmes not only raised their awareness of the value of educational

technology but also imparted the practical skills to integrate ICT effectively in the teaching process, particularly in enriching learning environments. For example, through the workshops provided by NGOs, teachers reported that they were able to experiment with various ICT equipment, including computers and digital projectors. They also learned about how such equipment could be leveraged to create interactive and multimedia-rich lessons, provide visual demonstrations of difficult concepts, and facilitate collaborative activities among students. During FGD, TE-5 noted as follows:

The workshop gave us an opportunity to see how computers can be used with projectors to present materials. We were also able to experiment with these devices ourselves. The NGO facilitators guided us in using PowerPoint software to create slides with notes and pictures that could be displayed on the projector (FGD with teachers from school A).

The experience recounted in the excerpt demonstrates that ICT-related workshops organised by NGOs exposed teachers to potential applications of ICT devices in teaching and provided opportunities for hands-on practice. This is consistent with ample literature suggesting that effective ICT professional development for educators should focus on two key components: developing technical skills through hands-on training and building pedagogical knowledge of how to integrate technology into teaching and learning (Hughes, 2005; Lawless & Pellegrino, 2007). Furthermore, observations into the teaching practice of many in-service teachers indicate that despite having a conceptual understanding of ICT, they often lack the capacity to meaningfully incorporate ICTs in teaching due to insufficient practical skills (Voogt et al., 2013). Therefore, by providing teachers with an opportunity to experiment with ICT devices while receiving guidance from NGO facilitators on how to use the technology, NGO-based workshops assisted them in bridging this conceptual-practical divide.

Constraints limiting the effectiveness of the CBPs

This study revealed several constraints hindering the effectiveness of the CBPs provided by NGOs, as discussed below:

Short duration of delivery

Teachers unveiled that the CBPs offered by NGOs, particularly workshops and seminars, were conducted for a very short duration. This not only made it difficult for them to absorb and retain the information properly but also limited their opportunity to interact and exchange ideas with facilitators and fellow teachers, which was important for enhancing understanding and consolidating skills obtained

from the training. On average, teachers reported that most seminars and workshops conducted by NGOs lasted less than three days. Due to the limited time, some modules were not properly covered, and others were only summarised or skipped. Instead of thoroughly covering the materials during the programme sessions, teachers reported being asked to study the materials independently using the training manuals provided during the training. TE-3 shared his frustration over the situation during FGD, stating that:

Of the many workshops organised by NGOs that I have attended, none have lasted longer than three days. Due to the shortage of time, there was always a sense of rush. Some modules were not covered well, while others were skipped altogether. Although we were given learning materials and encouraged to read them after the training, I believe we would have grasped the concepts more effectively if they had been thoroughly discussed during the workshops themselves (FGD with teachers from school C).

As a critical component of effective capacity building, adequate time allocation enables interactive discussions, clarification of doubts, and hands-on practice, which are essential for teachers to assimilate and implement new skills in their classrooms. While no consensus exists on the optimal duration of CBPs, especially workshops and seminars, the literature indicates that as a critical resource, time must be afforded significant consideration during any capacity-building planning to maximise the effectiveness of the CBPs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this regard, time allocation must account for sufficient sessions and breaks to facilitate effective knowledge acquisition and assimilation. It further needs to accommodate a mix of learning activities, including group participation through panel discussions, debates, plenary sessions, and breakout groups (Desimone, 2009). Thus, the brief duration of the workshops organised by NGOs, as highlighted in the findings, considerably constrains their ability to enhance teachers' management of the classroom learning environment. This suggests that more attention is required when determining the duration of CBPs to ensure that the allocated time is sufficient to bring desired outcomes.

Lack of continued support

The findings indicated that the CBPs provided by NGOs were not well sustained, particularly after the completion of the NGOs' capacity-building projects. Teachers mentioned that although the initial CBPs tended to be helpful, follow-up support and resources diminished rapidly after the NGOs' projects concluded. As a result, many of the strategies imparted by the CBPs were not implemented long-term by the teachers at schools. Without continued support measures, including funding for teaching and learning materials and refresher CBPs, teachers reported that

they progressively reverted to using their traditional teaching methods that did not foster a conducive learning environment for students. Describing the impact of the lack of continued support on the CBPs, TE-10 noted:

The workshops were very useful in providing innovative ideas and strategies to improve the learning environment. However, after the workshops ended, it became very difficult to sustain the changes. There were neither teaching and learning materials to implement the suggested activities nor refresher training to update our knowledge and motivate us to continue improving. Over time, most of us drifted back to our old ways of doing things (Interview with TE-10/School B).

The absence of continuous support has been consistently recognised as a key barrier to the long-term success of initiatives undertaken by NGOs (Abiddin et al., 2022; Smillie & Torodovic, 2001). This excerpt demonstrates that NGOs continue to encounter similar challenges when implementing their CBPs. Without ongoing support, research indicates that many CBPs fail to generate lasting change, resulting in the rapid loss and underutilisation of the skills and strategies imparted by these programmes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Consistent with the findings, the literature also highlights the continuous availability of resources as critical to reinforcing and institutionalising new knowledge and practices for effective utilisation of skills acquired from CBPs (URT, 2017). When teachers lack access to necessary resources, including teaching and learning materials, they may face difficulties in translating their newly acquired skills into practice. This situation often leads to a decline in motivation, ultimately contributing to a reversion to previous practices.

Conclusion

Previous research has shown that teachers need ongoing capacity building to remain effective practitioners and adequately address the various challenges posed by the changing education landscape. With a focus on the CBPs provided by NGOs, the current study investigated the initiatives, impact, and constraints facing such programmes in enhancing teachers' competence in managing the learning environment. Based on the findings, NGOs provided a variety of CBPs, which enhanced teachers' competencies in diverse areas related to the management of classroom learning environments. However, such programmes may not be able to produce sustainable changes in teachers' practices due to the short duration of delivery and lack of continuous support. The CBPs, such as seminars and workshops, improved teachers' skills in the short term but failed to generate lasting impacts in teachers' practice. After initial phases of motivation and enthusiasm for applying new strategies, teachers faced difficulties implementing and maintaining

their skills, knowledge and attitudes when ongoing resources and opportunities for reinforcement were not provided. This led to a decline in motivation and a reversion to previous practices, thereby diminishing the gains from the CBPs. The study thus concludes that for the CBPs provided by NGOs to have a transformative and sustainable impact on teachers' management of the classroom environment, they must extend beyond short training and provide ongoing resources and reinforcement.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the study recommends that NGOs and governments should make efforts to ensure the sustainability of the CBPs so that teachers may fully benefit from the programmes. NGOs should gradually prepare local actors and appropriate government bodies to take ownership of the CBPs by involving them in the planning and implementation of the CBPs from the start. The government, through relevant ministries, should establish clear plans to effectively assume, continue, and potentially scale up successful capacity-building programmes (CBPs) organised by NGOs once funding ends and programmes transition to government oversight. Given that sustained capacity building is best achieved through national systems and specialised institutions focused on professional development, it is also recommended that governments formally integrate effective NGO-led CBPs into ongoing professional development programmes and allocate budgetary resources accordingly. This strategic integration is crucial to ensure that government funding and structures seamlessly support and ideally expand CBPs, thereby allowing teachers to benefit from sustainable professional development over the long term.

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