THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
LIBRARY

Author Statement of Accessibility- Part 2- Permission for Internet Access

Name of Candidate : PARMESHWAR PRASAD MOHAN

Degree : MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department/School : School of Education

Institution/University : University of the South Pacific

Thesis Title : Teacher's Perceptions of Professional Development at Two Fijian Secondary Schools

Date of completion of requirements for award : May, 2015

1. I authorise the University to make this thesis available on the Internet for access by USP authorised users.

2. I authorise the University to make this thesis available on the Internet under the International digital theses project.

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 10/08/2015

Contact Address
P. O. BOX 8046
Vale Levu,
PH: (+679) 432 3312
E-mail: parmeshwar.p.mohan@gmail.com

Permanent Address
29 Laubu Place
Nadeng
Nasini, Fiji
TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT TWO FIJIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan

Supervised Research Project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

Copyright © 2015 by Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan

School of Education
Faculty of Arts, Law and Education
The University of the South Pacific

May, 2015
DECLARATION

Statement by Author

I, Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan, declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published, or substantially overlapping with material submitted for the award of any degree at any institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

Signature.................................................................         Date........................................

Name: Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan

Student ID No: s95008827

Statement by Supervisor

The research in this thesis was performed under my supervision and to my knowledge is the sole work of Mr. Parmeshwar Prasad Mohan.

Signature.................................................................         Date: .................................

Name: Associate Professor Dr. Govinda Ishwar Lingam

Designation..........................................................................................................................................................
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis is a dream comes true for me. There are many individuals to whom I am thankful for making this happen. I am extremely thankful to my Supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Govinda Ishwar Lingam for his supervision in the process of completing this research study. His continuous guidance and support have helped me in making this journey a reality.

I would like to thank the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education for giving me the approval to conduct my research and the two case study school heads for helping me in selecting the participants and also the research participants for having confidence in me and agreeing to participate in the study.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues for the encouragement and support they provided me in the entire process of the research.

To my family, my wife Deepa Mohan and my two sons Ashutosh Mohan and Deveshwar Mohan who have been my pillar of strength, Thank You. You have been very supportive and understanding of the work and amount of time I spent completing this thesis. Thank you for helping me through the turbulence of stress and frustration as I worked on this thesis. I truly treasure your patience and all the sacrifices that you have made for me. Thank you for being there when I needed you the most.
Abstract

This research examines teachers’ perceptions of Professional Development (PD) programmes in two Fiji secondary schools. Effective PD for teachers is regarded as a crucial ingredient in successful implementation of educational reforms.

A principal and two sub research questions guide the study: What are teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes? a) What are teachers’ perceptions of the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching? b) How did apprentice and experienced teachers perceive the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills?

Using a qualitative research design, data were gathered by means of document analysis and semi-structured interviews with 20 experienced and 10 apprentice teachers from the two case study secondary schools. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Subsequent analysis of the data delineated themes that emerged after several readings. Document analysis included data from the Fiji Education Staffing Appointment (FESA) system and the Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS). This enabled verification of the information participants provided on PD undertaken and also the information about the school, staff and students.

The major findings to emerge are: first, success of PD depends on: the presenter, timing, collective participation and appropriateness of the PD; secondly, self-reflection through honest self-appraisal helps in planning of PD; thirdly, whether teachers are apprentice or experienced, all need PD to sustain the changes made to their teaching practice; and finally, teachers’ communication to share ideas forms the foundation of any PD. Overall, teachers’ perception is that PD enables them to work on improving their practice to ensure more effective facilitation of students’ learning.

This study, by providing information on the PD needs of the teachers in Fiji, could be of interest to schools and the Ministry of Education (MoE). The recommendations could
assist schools and the ministry in deciding how to improve the PD programmes to equip teachers to embrace quality education for Fiji’s children. Extension of the research could involve more schools, to increase the validity and reliability of its findings. It is recommended that teachers from remote island schools also be included in the study, to provide insight into the effects of their relative geographical isolation.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................. i

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................. ii

LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES .................................................................................................. iii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ........................................................................................................ iv

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY ................................................................. 1

1.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background of the study ................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Statement of the problem ............................................................................................... 2

1.3 Aim of the study ............................................................................................................. 3

1.4 Research question ......................................................................................................... 3

1.5 Significance of the study ............................................................................................... 3

1.6 Key concepts and terms ............................................................................................... 4

1.7 Organisation of the study ............................................................................................ 6

1.8 Summary ....................................................................................................................... 7

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ......................................................................... 8

2.0 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 8

2.1 Conceptualisation of PD .............................................................................................. 8

2.2 Purpose of PD ............................................................................................................... 9
CHAPTER THREE: STUDY CONTEXT: FIJI

3.0 Introduction ...........................................................................................................24
3.1 Geographical context.............................................................................................24
3.2 Distribution of schools and teachers....................................................................25
3.3 Roles and Responsibilities of MoE........................................................................27
3.4 MoE Commitments towards Quality Education....................................................28
3.5 MoE Policy on PD................................................................................................29
3.6 Roles and Responsibilities of PDU........................................................................32
3.7 Summary ...............................................................................................................32
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ..............................................34

4.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................34
4.1 Justification of research design ..................................................................................34
4.2 Qualitative research .................................................................................................35
4.3 Case study ................................................................................................................36
4.4 Research Instruments .............................................................................................37
4.5 Population sample ..................................................................................................40
4.6 Data analysis ............................................................................................................42
4.7 Validity and reliability ............................................................................................42
4.8 Triangulation ..........................................................................................................43
4.9 Ethical considerations .............................................................................................44
4.10 Summary ................................................................................................................44

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH FINDINGS .........................................................46

5.0 Introduction ..............................................................................................................46
5.1 Qualitative data .......................................................................................................46
5.2 Summary ..................................................................................................................59

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS ........................................60

6.0 Introduction ..............................................................................................................60
6.1 Research Question (a) ..........................................................................................61
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

List of Tables

Table 3.1: Number of schools and teachers per division and district

Table 5.1: School organised PD

Table 5.2: MoE organised PD

Table 6.1: Summary of comments

List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework of PD

Figure 3.1: Geographical location of Fiji in the Pacific

Figure 7.1: PD process
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEST...........................Basic Employment Skills Training

DEO............................Divisional Education Officer

ECE............................Early Childhood Education

ESRI............................External Schools Review Inspection

FEMIS..........................Fiji Education Management Information System

FESA..........................Fiji Education Staffing Appointment

FESP..........................Fiji Education Sector Programme

EFA.............................Education For All

EO...............................Education Officer

FICAC..........................Fiji Independence Commission Against Corruption

FSTCF..........................Fiji Schools Teachers Competency Framework

FTRB..........................Fiji Teachers Registration Board

ICT..............................International Communication Technology

LANA............................Literacy Assessment and Numeracy Assessment

MoE.............................Ministry of Education

NCF.............................National Curriculum Framework

NCTAF......................... National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future

NGO.............................Non-Government Organisation

PD...............................Professional Development

PDU.............................Professional Development Unit
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PEO</td>
<td>Principal Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Public Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSE</td>
<td>Permanent Secretary of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMS</td>
<td>Schools Information Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO</td>
<td>Senior Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Teacher Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU</td>
<td>Teacher Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
Overview of the Study

1.0 Introduction

This study seeks to determine teachers’ perceptions on Professional Development (PD) sessions they have undergone while in-service. It looks at the PD sessions that were conducted by the schools and the Ministry of Education (MoE).

The Government of Fiji in recent years has launched efforts to improve education by creating a fundamental shift in what children learn and how they are taught. If children are to achieve at levels demanded by the high standards that government and schools have adopted, however, teachers will have to help them do so. Teachers are necessarily at the centre of reform, for they must carry out the demands of high standards in the classroom (Cuban, 1990; Helmer, Bartlett, Wolgemuth, & Lea, 2011). Thus, the success of ambitious education reform initiatives hinges, in large part, on the qualifications and effectiveness of teachers. As such, teachers need to undergo appropriate PD programmes to match the required standards. Thus, teachers’ perceptions of the current PD programmes are deemed helpful to bring about changes to uplift the standards.

This is an introductory chapter and it presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, and the principal and the sub research questions. Also included are the significance of the study, research methodology, and the key concepts and terms. The chapter concludes by giving the outline of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Darling-Hammond (1999) states that society should realise that the greatest investment of education dollars is when they are spent educating the teachers. She states that a teacher’s knowledge promotes high student achievement. This teacher knowledge should be gained through effective, planned, ongoing PD sessions designed to improve them (Burke, 2000). Today teachers are expected to maintain high academic standards, teach all types of students through a variety of teaching strategies, and be accountable
for each student’s academic progress (Barnard, 2004). As such, teachers need to undergo appropriate PD programmes to match the required standards.

In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Fiji introduced its compulsory education initiative in 1993 to ensure that all school-age children have access to basic education (MoE, 2014d). The MoE has begun taking steps to ensure that this commitment is realised in all schools. New initiatives have been pursued for implementation to ensure that education is made a priority for all Fijians. Though the goal is challenging, the MoE continues to pursue possibilities and alternatives that will permit all Fijians to be educated and improve their lives (Bole, 2014, as cited in MoE, 2014a).

Fiji’s education system has been experiencing a period of rapid and multiple reforms including: implementation of outcome based learning and continuous assessment replacing external examination at primary and lower secondary level; introduction of Literacy Assessment and Numeracy Assessment (LANA) at Years 4, 6 and 8; a National Curriculum Framework (NCF); and Leadership and Management Training for current leaders and future school leaders (Lingam, 2005). However, as Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) state, educational reforms introduced will never bring success unless teachers continuously learn through self-reflection and working collaboratively with their colleagues to improve student performance. To bring about on-going improvement in teachers’ knowledge and skills, it is important for teachers to undergo relevant and focused PD programmes.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The education system in Fiji, in the last decade, has been undergoing various reforms (Lingam, 2005). Teachers are necessarily at the centre of reforms, which are to achieve high standards in the classroom; thus, teacher PD programmes need to be a major focus. For these reasons, MoE in Fiji has made it mandatory for each teacher to undergo at least 20 hours of PD each year. Unfortunately there is currently no structure in place to plan PD’s at school, district and national levels. In light of this, an investigation into the teachers’ perceptions of PD is warranted. Furthermore, to the author’s knowledge, there
is no prior research in a Fijian context that directly investigates teachers’ perceptions on the purpose and value of the PD they undertake.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to determine teachers’ perceptions on PD sessions. First, it was to collect and report teachers’ perceptions of PD in two secondary schools. Secondly, the study was designed to determine whether or not PD programmes have an impact on learning and teaching. Finally, it was to provide insight into the different PD needs of apprentice and experienced teachers in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills. The results of this study should provide schools and the MoE with data to evaluate their current PD programmes and determine if changes should be made.

1.4 Research Questions

Given the aim of this study, the following principal research question was posed to help guide the research:

What are teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes?

In addition, two sub questions were posed in support of the principal research question:

(a) What are teachers’ perceptions regarding the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching?

(b) What do apprentice and experienced teachers perceive of the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Fishman, Marx, Best and Tal (2003) claim that continuous research on teachers’ PD will help to create an empirical knowledge base that links various forms of PD to effective teacher learning. However, having the knowledge of effective forms of teachers' PD alone is insufficient to ensure successful PD for teachers (Aminudin, 2012). Thus, this study is considered to be significant for several reasons.
Firstly, it addresses a gap in research pertaining to teachers’ perceptions regarding PD in Fiji secondary schools. Secondly, by investigating the current state of PD for teachers and enquiring about teachers’ perceptions on this, one can gain an understanding of the problems and recognise solutions to these problems. Thirdly, the identification of teachers’ perceptions and the level to which they perceive current PD content is implemented into learning and teaching should be beneficial in future PD planning. Finally, taking the views of both the apprentice and the experienced teachers would enable the schools and the MoE to identify if there was a need for additional PD sessions for either of the two groups of teachers.

1.6 Key concepts and terms

To help readers comprehend better, some common concepts and terms used in this study have been briefly explained with the support of literature.

1.6.1 Professional Development (PD)

According to Thakral (2011) PD is a process in which learning opportunities are created for teachers, resulting in students receiving the benefits from the teachers’ new knowledge. This definition is adopted for the purpose of this study since the entire aim for teachers’ PD is to make a positive impact on students’ achievements.

1.6.2 Staff development

According to Stout (1996) staff development, sometimes called continuing education, in-service training, or PD, is a central tool for altering teacher behaviours. In the educational profession, educators have often interchanged the terms PD, in-service training, and staff development.

1.6.3 Effective PD

Desimone (2009) points out that effective PD is in fact that which is believed to result in changes in teacher knowledge and practice and possibly students’ achievement. Some common features of effective PD are measured to assess the effectiveness of any PD
programmes, and they include content, active learning, collective participation, duration and coherence. This definition is adopted for the purpose of this study.

1.6.4 PD programme

According to Joyce and Showers (1995) PD programmes are related to formal and informal educational training for the improvement of teachers, educated persons, and professionals. It is said to be a continuous process of acquiring new teaching knowledge and skills through targeted intervention.

1.6.5 Apprentice teachers

Barnard (2004) graded teachers with less than three years of service as apprentice teachers. According to Darling-Hammond (1998) apprentice teachers are teachers who need to master the basic functioning rules of the classroom. This will allow teachers to develop a positive attitude towards problem solving, reflect on teaching situations, and engage in educational research. This is to make sure that teachers will be well prepared with the tools to begin to understand their students and how to teach their entire classroom effectively.

1.6.6 Experienced teachers

Experienced teachers are mostly teachers with more than three years of service who usually search for proven techniques that would make their teaching more effective for their students (Barnard, 2004). Experienced teachers usually ensure that all students learn with a common goal. Being an active participant in PD can assist experienced teachers in becoming better-qualified teachers. With higher demands being placed upon educators in terms of accountability, experienced teachers are often more cautious of the time they devote to PD opportunities (Barnard, 2004). For the purpose of this study Barnard’s definitions of experienced and apprentice teachers have been adopted.
1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into seven chapters. Chapter One has outlined the background, statement of the problem, the aim, research questions, significance of the study and the key concepts and terms.

The next chapter, Chapter Two, provides a review of the body of literature from the international as well as the local contexts. This chapter looks at the conceptualisation of PD, the purpose behind PD, what makes effective PD and the contrasting models of PD. It also includes the impact of PD on learning and teaching, PD for beginning teachers and factors affecting teacher change. Later in the chapter self-initiated PD, PD through teachers’ networks and the challenges for future growth in PD are discussed. Finally, towards the end of the chapter a conceptual framework of PD is provided.

Chapter Three outlines the context of the study. It provides relevant information on how the Ministry of Education (MoE) has managed PD for its teachers in its geographical and historical context. It includes locations of schools and teachers as per division and districts. The roles and responsibilities of MoE and its commitments towards quality education are also outlined. Towards the end of the chapter the MoE PD policy and the roles and responsibilities of the Professional Development Unit (PDU) governing the policy are presented.

Chapter Four outlines the research methodology. It provides the justification for the research design, explores the research instruments used for data collection, provides details regarding the methods chosen, discusses the data analysis process, provides justification of the reliability and validity of data collected and finally discusses the ethics involved in the research.

Chapter Five reports the findings gathered using the research instruments chosen. It provides the document analysis, followed by the interview analysis. The analysis is carried out under various themes, which were derived from the data collected.
Chapter Six discusses the findings of the study. The key findings of this research are critically discussed and integrated with reference to the literature reviewed. The findings are presented under the principal and the sub research questions.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, presents the conclusion and outlines the suggestions and recommendations. The limitations of the study together with the suggestions for further research are also presented.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the study. It has provided the background, the statement of the problem, the aim, the research questions, the significance of the study, together with the key concepts and terms. Additionally, the chapter has provided the organisational structure of the remaining sections of the study. This leads to the next chapter, Chapter Two, which provides a review of literature on PD.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The study explores the perceptions of teachers on professional development (PD). This chapter reviews the literature on teacher PD with particular attention to teachers’ PD experience while in-service. It covers the conceptualisation of PD, purpose behind PD, effective PD and the contrasting models of PD. It also includes the impact of PD on learning and teaching, PD for apprentice teachers and factors affecting teacher change. Later in the chapter self-initiated PD, PD through teachers’ networks and the challenges for future growth in PD are discussed. Finally, on the basis of the review of literature, a conceptual framework for the study has been derived and presented towards the end of the chapter.

2.1 Conceptualisation of PD

According to Stout (1996) PD is a central tool for altering teacher behaviours. In the educational profession, educators have often interchanged the terms PD, in-service training, and staff development. Jones and Lowe (1990) refer to PD as a continuing process that changes a teacher’s practice. It should involve examining assumptions about teaching, learning, and the subject matter. Teachers must look at ways to explore transferring research-based knowledge into classroom practices. PD should offer practices that provide new techniques, strategies, methods, and approaches with feedback in a non-threatening environment (Barnard, 2004). Thakral (2011) suggests that PD is a process in which learning opportunities are created for teachers, resulting in students receiving the benefits from the teachers’ new knowledge.

Guskey (2000) describes PD programmes as a way in which to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persons toward an articulated end. He names the end as being student learning. Therefore, PD programmes should bring about change in a teacher’s classroom practices and beliefs, thus resulting in added student learning. According to Uranga (1995), PD should be used to improve and refine
teachers’ knowledge and skills. PD programmes should be an integral part of the school programme and not just a supplemental in-service (Uranga, 1995).

For Burke (2000) PD, from a school’s point of view, is a planned, comprehensive, and systemic programme designed by the school to improve ability of all school personnel to design, implement, and assess productive change in each individual and in the school organisation. Barnard (2004) pointed out that all activities for PD must relate to a larger programme goal. Many teachers resent sitting through long days of in-service training and not receiving any educational benefits. Information presented in such long day sessions is rarely used. Some value it but it is all too rarely implemented into their classrooms (Burke, 2000). MoE facilitators often experience frustration when workshops and conferences fail to lead to significant change in practice when the teachers return to their classrooms.

PD should be research and data driven. Designed with teachers and students in mind, PD should bring a significant change within the educational programme, resulting in teacher growth. Through this added teacher knowledge, improvement in student achievement should be evident (Barnard, 2004).

2.2 Purpose of PD

Though this study focuses on the practice of PD in Fiji, it is important to recognise that it is a school’s attempt to initiate reform. Because educational reform is an international phenomenon, notes Hargreaves (2000), it is important to recognise PD as a universal concept as it allows one to identify and reflect on the changes of education with the lapse of time, which has created the need for ongoing change in PD. Thakral (2011) supports this notion, stressing the nature of PD as a universal concept, and explaining that despite geographical and cultural differences some common features concerning the changing nature of teachers’ professional learning are identified. Hargreaves (2000) categorises the historical phases of educational PD into four different stages: the preprofessional age, the age of the autonomous professional, the age of the collegial professional, and the postmodern age. It is not necessary to explore the progression of education in each phase; it is, however, necessary to recognise the nature of such
progression of education to gain a deeper understanding of the need for and significance of PD in contemporary times. Reflection and collaboration have been described as the core values of PD (Thakral, 2011). The preprofessional stage, which was the norm in the first half of the twentieth century, modelled the ideal teachers as those who perfected the content of the subject they were teaching and knew how to get it across to students. The emphasis of teaching during this era centred on practices such as lecturing, note taking, questions and answers, through to final tests (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000).

With the progression of time, teaching practices now need to be consistent and should reflect the increasingly globalised world people live in. Such globalised economies render the introduction of educational technology as attractive, even necessary, resulting in a less definitive concept of what constitutes knowledge. Thus the concept of education itself, progressing from an isolated and structured concept to one that appears to be limitless and uncertain, emphasises the need for teachers to actively engage in PD (Knapp, 2003).

2.3 Effective PD

The research that has been conducted, along with the experience of expert practitioners, provides some preliminary guidance about the characteristics of effective PD (Stiles, Loucks-Horsley, & Hewson, 1996). According to Hiebert (1999), research on teacher learning shows that fruitful opportunities to learn new teaching methods share several core features: (a) ongoing (measured in years) collaboration of teachers for purposes of planning, with (b) the explicit goal of improving students’ achievement of clear learning goals, (c) anchored by attention to students’ thinking, the curriculum, and pedagogy, and (d) access to alternative ideas and methods and opportunities to observe these in action and to reflect on the reasons for their effectiveness. Considering such findings, models of PD are developed for improving effectiveness.
2.3.1 Contrasting models of PD effectiveness

The situational and resource constraints in Fiji make it difficult to implement the type of PD often needed in schools. Little research has been done on the effectiveness of PD. The two most commonly use PD models in schools are traditional PD and job-embedded PD (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The definition and the effectiveness of both the PD models are outlined below to clearly contrast the difference between the two models.

2.3.1.1 Traditional PD

Short-term or one-session workshops, trainings, seminars, lectures, and conference sessions are the mainstay of the traditional PD model. Schools, districts, MoE, and teacher-training colleges offer PD such as cooperative learning or classroom management, and training on topic areas such as Mathematics, Science, or Language. Teachers, sometimes in conjunction with their school or MoE, choose to attend specific activities throughout the year, depending on their availability, interest, need for continuing education units as part of recertification efforts, or motivation to learn more about the topic (Joyce & Showers, 1995). We can say that these are traditional PD because PD in Fiji is most commonly offered in this form.

Effectiveness of traditional PD model

Given its prevalence in education, reviews and studies have outlined the design elements and conditions under which the traditional PD model can be most successful at promoting change or affecting student achievement (Knapp, 2003). Research indicates that PD within the traditional model can be more effective if it is designed to:

- Be of longer duration. PD is more effective in changing teachers’ practice when it is of longer duration (Supovitz & Turner, 2000). Longer-term PD permits more time for teachers to learn about their own practice, especially if it includes follow-up (Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999). Smith and Gillespie (2007) found a direct and positive correlation between the number of hours teachers spend participating in PD activity and the amount and type of change related to the topic of the PD they demonstrated in the following year.
• Make a strong connection between what is learned in the PD and the teacher’s own work context. This is especially relevant if the PD is organised outside of the school. PD needs to help teachers plan for application and to identify and strategise barriers to application that they will face once back in their programmes. Devoting no time or little time for synthesis, integration, and planning beyond the PD programmes is inadequate preparation for application (Ottoson, 1997).

• Focus on subject-matter knowledge. Teachers themselves report that PD focused on content knowledge contributes to changes in instructional practice (Garet, et al., 2001).

• Include a strong emphasis on analysis and reflection, rather than just demonstrating techniques. Guskey (1997) and Sparks (1994) advocate PD that focuses on learning rather than on teaching, on problem-solving and reflectiveness rather than on acquiring new techniques, and on embedding change within the programme rather than on individual change. Student achievement improves, compared to the students of teachers who do not attend this intensive PD.

• Include a variety of activities. Such activities include theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and classroom application (Joyce & Showers, 1995). If PD is short-term or single session, it needs to be followed by assistance to help teachers implement what they learned (Stein & Wang, 1988). Teachers are more likely to learn from direct observation of practice and trial and error in their own classrooms than they are from abstract descriptions of teaching (Elmore, 1996). PD should also follow principles of adult learning: establish a supportive environment, acknowledge teachers’ prior experience, help teachers consider how new learning applies to their specific teaching situation, and encourage teachers to make their implicit knowledge about teaching explicit (Gardner, 1996). Some researchers recommend that to ensure the training will be used, it is necessary to present theory, model the instructional strategies, and give teachers the opportunity to practice with feedback and extensive support (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

• Encourage teachers from the same workplace to participate together. PD is more effective when teachers participate with others from their school, grade, or department
(Garet, et al., 2001). Smith and Gillespie (2007) also found that teachers from the same school, grade or department participating together in PD changed their thinking and acting more after the PD than did teachers who participated without other teachers from their workplace.

- **Focus on quality and features of PD, rather than on format or type.** Research indicates that the model or type of PD matters little, as long as it has features of high-quality training. Garet and colleagues (2001) found that the most important PD features for increasing knowledge and self-reported changes in practice were a focus on content knowledge; opportunities for hands-on, active learning; and greater coherence. To improve PD, it is more important to focus on the duration, collective participation, and the core features (i.e., content, active learning, and coherence) than type (Garet, et al., 2001).

### 2.3.1.2 Job-embedded PD

This approach, which became popular in the 1990s, locates training within the school programme or local context. Activities such as study circles or inquiry groups allow teachers greater participation in shaping the content of instruction and also provide them with the opportunity to investigate problems of student learning more closely tied to their own contexts (Ball & Cohen, 1999). This model emerged as a response to the research identifying the ineffective features of traditional PD, and it is not yet common in the Fiji context. Although there is overlap between these two models of PD, they can be distinguished by different goals, formats, and content.

Whitehurst (2002) believes that although there is not much argument that PD can help teachers gain new knowledge and adopt new practices, opinions differ concerning the factors of PD model, school or programme context, system or policy directives that must be in place for teacher learning and change to take place. Comparing and contrasting these two models illustrates that PD, like all other educational efforts, is subject to changes in direction, paradigm, philosophy, and approach, sometimes driven by policy changes and sometimes driven by advances in the knowledge base as a result of research (Whitehurst, 2002).
Effectiveness of the Job-embedded model

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of the job-embedded model when it includes:

• *A focus on helping teachers to study their students’ thinking, not just try new techniques.* Carpenter and Franke (1998) found that change was sustained over longer periods of time when teachers were trained and supported to really understand what their students were thinking, and teachers had a base from which to generalise practices to other situations and continue learning. Ancess (2000) identified teacher inquiry about student learning and student work as a powerful tool for changing teacher practice and ultimately changing school structure.

• *Collaborative learning activities among teachers.* It has been suggested that PD contributes to high performance when it focuses not on individual teachers but on groups of teachers within schools, especially where school culture supports the “professional lives” of the teachers (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). PD in schools constitutes another collaborative approach to teacher PD that is becoming popular in many teacher-education programmes.

• *Activities in which teachers make use of student performance data.* Taylor and colleagues (2005) investigated the effectiveness of job-embedded PD on reading scores, where teachers working together were introduced to the research on reading instruction and analysed their school’s reading achievement data as part of a larger reform effort to improve reading scores. Increased comprehension and fluency scores after 2 years were found in schools where teachers collaborated in reflective PD and used data to improve their teaching practice, aided by changes at the school level.

• *Help from facilitators to organise job-embedded PD.* Since job-embedded PD is a new experience for many teachers, they need encouragement to overcome their natural reluctance to sharing their concerns and their own and their students’ work with other teachers in the sharing or inquiry group. In addition, facilitators need training and support to guide the group’s development over time. Kazemi and Franke (2003) found that teachers needed to learn how to examine student work together, with a facilitator
structuring teacher meetings to help them focus specifically on the details of student work. Richardson and Placier (2001), looking at schools participating together in inquiry groups to implement changes in reading instruction, found that such groups go through stages of development, and that a trained facilitator can help to guide such groups through initial stages. McDonald (2001) describes a variety of methods for studying student work to help teachers learn how to speak with each other; one such method brings teachers together after school to say what interests them in a child’s work collected from students that day, followed by a general discussion among the teachers about students’ work.

2.4 The impact of PD on learning and teaching

Based on their research on teachers’ perceptions of the impact of continuous PD, Powell, Terrell, Furey and Scott-Evens (2003, as cited in Aminudin, 2012) choose to define the word ‘impact’ as changes in professional knowledge, practices and affective response as perceived by the individual practitioner. They argue that measuring impact does not necessarily have to rely only on quantifiable data. Instead, they propose that the impact of PD on teaching practice can also be assessed from the teachers’ insight into and on reflection of what constitutes significance and value in relation to their own personal, academic and professional needs and development.

Gabriel, Day and Allington (2011) observe that teachers in general believe that certain PD programmes they attended have a significant impact on their development as teachers. Teachers’ PD is a process aimed primarily at promoting learning and development of teachers’ professional knowledge, skills and attitudes (Dean, 1991; Guskey, 2000).

2.4.1 Cognitive and sentimental impact of PD

Participation in PD is believed to have some impact on the teachers’ ability to acquire and critically develop the knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence essential to good professional thinking, planning and practice with their students and colleagues through every phase of their teaching lives (Borko, 2004; Gabriel et al., 2011; Poskitt, 2005). In
addition, Desimone (2009) asserts that PD also has an impact on the teachers’ ability to decide on and implement valued changes in teaching and leadership behaviour so that they can educate their students more effectively, thus achieving an agreed balance between individual, school and national needs.

2.4.2 Immediate and long-term impact of PD

Teachers will experience immediate and long-term impacts of PD (Aminudin, 2012). The teachers’ perceptions of the impact of continuous development reveal that most of the teachers identified the immediate impact of PD as having the ability to reflect more deeply on their practice (Aminudin, 2012). It is believed that this ability to reflect has enabled the teachers to be better at evaluating the effectiveness of their own practice. Harris, Cale and Musson (2011) who conducted research on primary teachers’ perceptions of physical education, report similar findings. Almost all of the teachers involved in their research report an immediate positive impact on their perceptions of physical education as the result of the PD experience.

In the long term, teachers also believe that their PD experiences have helped them develop greater confidence with their practice (Timperly, Wilson, Barrar & Fung; 2007). Likewise, Harris and colleagues (2011) also reveal that most of the teachers involved in their research perceived their PD experience as having a positive impact on their confidence in teaching.

In light of this finding, Fishman and colleagues (2003) maintain that teachers’ growing confidence is evident in their ability to articulate their personal views on educational matters clearly. PD programmes also help teachers to become more knowledgeable in the subject content they teach. In addition, reflective practice and constant evaluation of their teaching practice are also believed to lead to a better lesson structure to meet the students’ needs effectively (Harris et al., 2011; Aminudin, 2012).

2.5 PD for apprentice teachers

Teacher induction is another area of PD that is critical to teacher education for the role it plays in initiating apprentice teachers into the teaching fraternity. It should not be taken
for granted that by their graduation day, apprentice teachers are fully prepared for learning and teaching for the rest of their career (Hargreaves, 1997; Sharma, 2012). In fact they are just beginning their development as they enter classrooms as teachers, and they need significant support to grow (Solomon, 2009).

As apparent from the review of literature, the way teachers are socialised in the initial stages of their career determines the pace at which they progress on the continuum from apprentice to professional. In many countries, plunging teachers into the classroom without a proper process of professional induction has been counterproductive (UNESCO, 1990). As a result induction programmes are mandatory in many countries and they tend to emphasise the building of strong professional relationships among beginning and experienced teachers, as well as the development of teaching practice. In China, for example, both apprentice and experienced teachers engage in widespread peer observation, lesson preparation, and teaching research groups. In France, beginning teachers participate in teacher institutes at the local university and are inaugurated into a community of same-subject teachers. In Switzerland, beginning teachers work in practice groups of about six teachers from across different schools and together they participate in peer observation, observation of more experienced colleagues, and self or peer evaluation within the practice group (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF), 1996, as cited in Sharma, 2012). This is considered professionally sound as it allows the new teachers to develop their skills and knowledge on the job site.

2.6 Factors affecting teachers change

Teachers do not exist in a void; they are individuals with different backgrounds and ambitions who work in a variety of schools. In the same way that student achievement is affected by factors other than the instruction they receive, teacher change is also affected by individual and school factors that influence how they provide instruction (Fullan, 2007). Although the teacher is always the link between PD and student achievement, teaching is only one of many factors affecting student learning. The actual impact of the PD is diluted by all of the other factors that support or hinder teachers’ efforts to make
change. The dilution effect is the primary criticism behind arguments against judging PD according to process–product research. The process of PD does not always result in the product of student achievement (Adey, 1995).

Ottoson (1997) names five factors that affect application of what is learned in training:

1. Educational factors: The characteristics of the PD, including the quality of facilitation, organisation, and methods.

2. Innovation: The ideas, practices, and strategies taught or suggested to teachers during the PD.

3. Predisposing factors: The characteristics of the teachers, including their motivation for attending, background knowledge, and pre-existing attitudes.

4. Enabling factors: The teacher’s skill in applying the new strategy; factors in the context of the teacher’s programme, including resources, authority, and opportunity to apply what has been learned.

5. Reinforcing factors: The factors in the context of the teacher’s programme that support the teacher in applying knowledge, such as help from colleagues, the administrators and students.

Guskey and Sparks (1996) also considered administrator knowledge and practices, plus parent knowledge and practices, to be important factors mediating teacher change and student learning, not least because parents and administrators affect curriculum policies that dictate the types of changes teachers can make.

### 2.7 Self-Initiated PD

Teachers’ PD has shown a shift from formal institutional-based practices to individual driven activities where teachers are assumed to be self-learning, evaluating and reflecting (Simergn, 2014). Richards and Farrell (2005) say that teacher education has shifted its focus from being institutional and managerial dominated to being individual teachers’ self-directed processes where provision of resources and materials of self-
improvement is ensured in consultation with the institution and management bodies. The ultimate goal of educating teachers is not only helping them to master the scientific concepts of learning and teaching but also enabling them to make use of the skills and knowledge they have gained in actual classroom institutions. A self-initiated PD is a process in which a learner assumes primary responsibility for planning, implementation, and evaluating the learning process.

In the PD and teacher education literature, there is a strong concern for teachers’ reflectiveness. Schon (1983) discusses how to help teachers develop a stance of looking at their own practice by analysing, adapting, and always challenging their assumptions, in a self-sustaining cycle of reflecting on their own theory and practice, learning from one problem to inform the next problem. Ferry and Ross-Gordon (1998) found that a reflective stance was not automatically related to years of teaching experience. Some new teachers had already adopted a reflective stance and demonstrated a cyclical approach to problem solving, whereas some very experienced teachers used a sequential approach to problem solving: when faced with a problem, they summoned their existing knowledge and chose the best-fit solution from what they already knew (MoE, 2014e). Self-reflection encourages teachers to become aware of their thoughts (intellectual) and feelings (affectional) that relate to a particular learning experience or areas of practice (Lingam, 2012).

2.8 PD through teachers’ networks

Teacher networks aim to bring teachers together to address common problems that occur in their work and thus promote personal teacher PD as well as groups (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Teacher networks foster a sense of collegiality among teachers and encourage them to be reflective practitioners. Learning circles enable teachers to produce knowledge, not just disseminate received knowledge (Sharma, 2012).

This study considers that strategies such as peer-coaching, mentoring and induction programmes, sharing best practices, and teachers’ networks provide the way forward for effective teacher PD. Effective PD will increase teachers’ knowledge and skills, in turn enhancing students’ learning, which is the ultimate goal for any education system.
2.9 Challenges for Future Growth in PD

In reviewing the current literature on PD, several authors mention barriers to providing effective PD. Smith and Gillespie (2007) focus on a lack of funding for PD needs. Darling-Hammond (1999) explores the issue of teacher time to participate in PD. The largest barrier to implementing effective PD tends to be monetary. Stout (1996) points out that PD programmes result in direct and indirect costs to local and state agencies. Direct costs arise when consultants provide workshops or training. If replacing the teachers while they attend the PD activities necessitates the hiring of substitutes, this adds to the direct cost to the MoE.

Teachers also place many barriers upon themselves in the area of PD. Many teachers do not see the importance of PD. Duke (1993) and Cochran-Smith (2004) found that with every struggling student one could possibly find a deficiency within his/her teacher. Teachers are often ready to blame factors outside their control for their students’ lack of achievement. Experienced teachers often have experienced the latest reform efforts. These efforts are sometimes dropped when there is a transition in administration, funding is lost, or priorities change. Therefore, experienced teachers feel that the long-time commitment to the reform effort is not there. In addition, many teachers are resistant to PD because they are resistant to the manner in which it is implemented (Barnard, 2004).

Teachers oppose PD for personal reasons. After teaching for several years they may feel that they have mastered the art. However, the methods that were used to educate children a decade ago are not that successful for the children in the context of the 21st century. In addition, to commit to growing professionally requires time and effort. Dealing with the demands of work and family means teachers are often genuinely pressed for additional time; small wonder of many teachers feel overwhelmed with the daily activities in today’s society (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Growing professionally involves a great amount of effort, energy, and risk. Teachers are often apprehensive or hesitant of failure (Duke, 2004). People associate failure with losing the respect of their professional colleagues. Rather than risk these reactions from coworkers, they choose to
blend in or keep a low profile, avoiding any initiative that might set them apart or bring excessive attention (Duke, 2004).

Schools that are trying to implement new PD should be sensitive to the fact that not all teachers are ready in their professional careers or personal lives to commit to PD. When teachers are forced to develop professionally, such goals often lack planning. Berkeley (2001) proposes that to have effective PD, MoE is challenged to consider the following for sustainable PD.

- Early years of teaching: apprentice teachers to be fostered and built on, with individual teachers engaged in reflection and action on pedagogy, quality of learning, and target setting.
- Equal opportunities: planning, assessment, subject knowledge and classroom management.
- Team teaching, collaborative inquiry and observation and demonstration lessons to be used as a means to achieve the first two aims.
- ICT focus to pursue advanced technologies and evaluating the impact of ICT and developing content for digital curriculums.
- Ministry to engage in early PD.
- Documentation of PD activities to form the basis of a career-long record.
- In-service leave to foster teachers’ professional and personal growth and reduce the risk of early exit.
- Experienced teachers to share ‘best practices’.
- Short courses or workshops to allow teachers to spend time in another environment where particular specialisms and/or expertise are in operation.
- ICT opportunities to sustain and enhance teachers’ skills and creating new virtual learning communities.

2.10 Conceptual Framework of PD

The conceptual framework of PD involves four important stages. The first is when teachers experience PD, which increases their knowledge and skills. The second stage is
when teachers use their new knowledge and skills to improve learning and teaching. The third stage is when changes to professional practices such as in the area of learning and teaching increase students’ learning. The final stage is where quality learning and teaching is achieved.

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of PD

2.11 Summary

This chapter focused on the review of literature related to PD. The review of literature covered conceptualisation of PD, purpose behind PD, effective PD and the contrasting models of PD. It also included the impact of PD on learning and teaching, PD for beginning teachers and factors affecting teacher change. Later in the chapter self-
initiated PD, PD through teachers’ networks and the challenges for future growth in PD were discussed. Finally, the conceptual framework of the study was presented, derived from the literature review. This leads to the next chapter, Chapter Three which provides an overview of the Fiji context of PD with specific reference to MoE.
CHAPTER THREE

Study Context: Fiji

3.0 Introduction

The focus of this study is on professional development (PD). This chapter outlines relevant information on how the Ministry of Education (MoE) manages PD for its teachers in its unique geographical and historical context. The information presented is mostly from the MoE’s available literature and includes an account of geographical context and the locations of schools and teachers by division and districts. The roles and responsibilities of MoE and its commitments towards quality education are also outlined. The chapter rounds off with an account of the MoE PD policy and the roles and responsibilities of the Professional Development Unit (PDU) governing the policy.

3.1 Geographical context

Fiji is spread across 332 islands in the South Pacific Ocean and is located closest to Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. Much of Fiji’s terrain is varied and its islands consist mainly of small beaches and mountains with a volcanic history. The two largest islands are Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. About 100 of the islands are inhabited, while the balance remain nature preserves (Brinery, 2009). According to the Fiji Islands Education Commission report the land mass totals 18,272 square kilometres spread across 1,127 kilometres from North to South and 789 kilometres from East to West (Learning Together, 2000). The majority of the country is mountainous with several peaks exceeding 3000 ft., and the balance of the smaller islands is a mixture of coral and limestone. Barrier reefs ring most islands.

The Figure 3.1 shows the geographical location of Fiji in the Pacific. This provides an understanding of the country under study in regard to the other Pacific Island countries.
According to the Fiji Bureau of Statistics (2013), the estimated population of Fiji is 861,374. From this population 135,526 are primary and 67,631 are secondary school children (MoE, 2013).

The pattern of population distribution and in turn the location of schools, especially those in remote and rural areas, affects possibilities for teacher PD (Lingam, 1996). Thus, investigating the impact of PD on learning and teaching is considered necessary.

### 3.2 Distributions of schools and teachers

Fiji’s geographical structure, limited size and the scattered nature of the population pose problems in the provision of educational facilities and quality teachers (Lingam, 2004). Serving in more remote areas deprives many teachers of opportunities to
undertake personal PD such as taking courses from the tertiary institutions. Most of the workshops conducted by MoE are mainly for the school heads or heads of department. The classroom teachers, who are regarded as the key implementers of the curriculum, have to rely on PD programmes conducted by school heads or the heads of department. Thus, decentralisation has helped. The MoE has been decentralised into 4 education divisions and 9 education districts, each headed by a Divisional Education Officer (DEO). This has enabled the ministry to carry out PD for teachers in their own districts and also helps in the monitoring of PD carried out by schools. In this way all teachers in Fiji are able to undergo at least some first-hand PD sessions from the experts themselves, rather than having to rely on their school heads or the department head for PD on the second-hand information or PD.

Decentralisation has had other benefits such as allowing service to be brought right to the door step. The teachers do not have to travel all the way to Suva to undertake PD. Providing for teachers to undertake PD in their own districts has enabled the ministry to save substantive and travelling costs for teachers who used to travel from rural and remote areas. In the past, a lot of teaching time was lost due to travelling long distances for PD sessions. Decentralisation has also given easy access to school heads: they are able to approach the DEOs to facilitate PD sessions for their respective schools.

Table 3.1 gives the names, as well as the number of schools and number and percentage of teachers by district, of the divisions and districts across which the geographical locations of schools have scattered the teachers. This gives an understanding of the need for dispersing effective PD to be undertaken by the teachers in the districts. Effective PD would enable teachers to develop their knowledge and skills to enhance learning and teaching regardless of their locations.
Table 3.1: Number of Schools per Division and District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>DISTRICT</th>
<th>Schools (n)</th>
<th>Teachers (n)</th>
<th>Teachers (% of total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Ba/Tavua</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ra</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lautoka/Yasawa</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1632</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nadroga/Navosa</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Nausori</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1639</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suva</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2172</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Macuata/Bua</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>1326</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cakaudrove</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>929</strong></td>
<td><strong>10158</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MoE (2014b)

As Table 3.1 clearly indicates, not only are the schools, the teachers as well are scattered throughout the 9 districts but the schools and the numbers of teachers are not proportionate. The main contributing factor to this is the school roll. The lower school rolls mean that rural and remote schools have fewer students per class. This results in teachers teaching composite classes in primary schools; and secondary schools, which lack resources as well as students, offer fewer subjects.

The rural and remote teachers face significantly more challenges than the urban teachers. To bring about effective learning in the classrooms, then, teachers need PD to perform to the standard required of them. For this reason, it is hoped that this research study could enable the schools and MoE to identify the types of PD Fiji’s teachers require.

3.3 Roles and responsibilities of MoE

The core function of the MoE is to ensure that all students from kindergarten to year 13, including vocational education students, have access to education of an acceptable quality. Other responsibilities include administration and management of education
policies, delivery of educational services, provision of a curriculum framework, policy guidelines and directions, and qualified teaching personnel (MoE, 2013).

But carrying out these responsibilities is not easy in Fiji because of the remote and/or island locations of many of the schools. MoE is challenged in ensuring that the standards in education are met and maintained across the whole system, in terms of human, physical and financial resources. The Fiji Islands Education Commission report highlights the need for government to assign high priority to teacher education (Learning Together, 2000). Furthermore, the Commission emphasises the need for teachers to be provided with a strong academic background in their subject areas. The history of teacher education in Fiji shows that teachers have not been well prepared, making obvious the need for on-going PD to ensure children’s learning is not adversely affected (Lingam, 2004).

3.4 MoE commitments towards better quality education

After the coup in 2006, the Interim government carried out a number of reforms in Fiji’s education system. Through the government’s Strategic Development Plan, the People’s Charter for Change, Peace and Progress 2008, and the Roadmap for Democracy and Socio-Economic Development, 2009–2014, the Ministry adopted its vision in the new direction as ‘Quality Education for Change, Peace and Progress’ (MoE, 2013). Towards this end, Fiji continues to work towards building a knowledge-based society. The government has encouraged various initiatives and reforms in order to leap forward in building a better Fiji for all citizens. Some of the reforms include:

- establishment of the Fiji Teachers Registration Board (FTRB)
- upgrading of primary schools into secondary schools in rural areas
- review of the curriculum through the formulation of the Fiji National Curriculum Framework
- decentralisation to improve the quality of services
- the provision of rural incentives for civil servants
• the development of the new Fiji Education Management Information System (FEMIS) so that it is user friendly and easily accessible
• the provision of capacity building for the Ministry’s staff
• the introduction of e-learning
• improvement of teacher quality through training incentives and capacity building (MoE, 2013:13-14).

The MoE has embarked on its vision to provide quality education to the children of Fiji, through various reforms. But the ministry is well aware that the focal points to any reforms in the education system are the teachers. To embrace high-quality education, good-quality teachers are needed, as the teachers make the greatest difference in terms of student achievements in the classroom. Developing good-quality teachers requires an MoE focus on teacher PD, the main focus of this study. To set a standard for teacher PD in Fiji, MoE thus has developed a PD policy for its teachers.

3.5 MoE policy on PD

The policy background, objectives and the underpinning principles and lighted in the sections that follow.

3.5.1 Policy background

The report of the Fiji Islands Education Commission (Learning Together, 2000) provided the basis for the formulation of the MoE PD policy. The highlights of the Commission report included: (1) improving the quality of teaching in schools by raising professional competence of teachers, (2) recommending development of a PD plan at national, divisional and school-based levels, (3) establishment of a Centre for Educational Leadership to provide PD opportunities for current and future school leaders, (4) active encouragement of teachers to access training to upgrade their qualifications and skills, and (5) provision of appropriate training to Education Officers in supervising, monitoring, and evaluating the performance of schools and in collaborating with teachers to improve institutional quality, especially in under-performing schools.
With his background, the policy formulated from the Fiji Islands Education Commission (2000) report enabled the MoE to articulate its policy objectives.

3.5.2 Policy objectives

The current MoE (2014) PD policy has three major objectives. First, it demonstrates that MoE is committed to providing a supportive and rewarding environment for its employees and recognises that the quality, responsiveness and professionalism of its workforce are inextricably linked to the achievement of its mission and strategic directions. Secondly, this policy is to encourage and support employees in their professional and career development. MoE acknowledges that PD is integral to personal job satisfaction, workplace productivity, reward and recognition, and is critical to the achievement of MoE’s mission of continuous improvement in the quality of its services. Thirdly, this policy applies to all employees of MoE, teaching staff, non-teaching staff, school committees and managements. It sets out the principles that underpin PD in MoE, and the provision of various professional development activities that are available for employees (MoE, 2014f).

The objectives embody MoE’s vision to organise PD for its employees, especially its practising teachers, to improve their performance and in turn their productivity at work.

3.5.3 Principles underpinning PD policy

Seven major principles underpin the provision of PD at MoE. (1) The provision of quality PD within MoE will lead to improved learning outcomes for children. (2) Decisions made on PD will consider the affordability and longer term sustainability of activities. (3) All PD activities are aligned to MoE’s needs and planned targets in workforce development and delivery of education at schools. (4) PD activities should be accessible to all relevant people and allowance made to ensure equitable distribution of opportunity to participate (5) Decisions and mechanisms are established in a transparent and accountable manner and in accordance with approved policy or procedures. (6) MoE
will acknowledge and recognise PD activities within MoE and from recognised training institutions, for purposes of qualifications upgrade. (7) MoE will ensure the provision of mandatory programmes to cover the core requirements of employees’ roles and responsibilities (MoE, 2014f).

The principles lay a path for the teachers about their expectations in relation to PD issues that PDU looks after. Participation in PD is a two-way process, benefiting both the teachers and MoE. By encouraging and supporting PD activities, MoE aims to assist its teachers to build their organisational knowledge and skills, obtain and maintain currency in PD and skills, enhance their career prospects and improve their leadership and management capabilities (MoE, 2014f).

The MoE expects that benefits gained are fed back into MoE, its schools and workforce. Through PD teachers would develop and maintain the latest knowledge and skills in teaching and learning technologies. This would also facilitate and promote in the MoE the creation of the most effective learning environments. PD could provide examples of good practice amongst staff who are directly involved in presenting PD to other staff to increase their profile and enabling them to interact and network effectively within the broader professional community at the local, national and international levels (MoE, 2014f).

MoE in partnership with the Fiji Education Sector Programme (FESP) recommended in its 2006 report that the ministry needs to establish a Professional Development Unit (PDU). The role of PDU is to oversee the development of PD at school, district, divisional and national levels. The overall objective is to enhance teachers’ knowledge and skills to improve student learning. Whether this objective is being achieved or not is what this research study has tried to determine.
3.6 Roles and responsibilities of PDU

The roles and responsibilities of the PDU of the MoE underline the importance of education and training across all sections of the ministry including schools and institutions so that efficient, effective and timely delivery of learning and teaching is fundamental to embracing quality education (MoE, 2013).

The PDU consists of five established staff: one SEO, one EO, one Administrative Officer, one Clerical Officer and one Typist. PDU has various responsibilities to carry out. These include coordination of PD activities across the ministry, management of local study leave for both local and overseas courses, leadership and management training for current school leaders and assistant leaders, future leaders training for identified potential school leaders, conduct of in-house training for the ministry administrative staff in identified areas of need, and coordination of service exams from PSC for administrative and professional staff and teachers (MoE, 2013).

As is stated earlier, PDU is responsible for all PD programmes undertaken by the MoE staff, which includes the teachers. All PD undertaken by the teachers needs to be registered with the PDU as stipulated in the PD Policy. These records of teachers’ PD participation can be accessed through the Fiji Education Staffing Appointment System (FESA). This study used FESA data to carry out document analysis in order to verify the data obtained from the case study schools. FESA helps the MoE officials to check on PD undertaken by individual teachers and the schools. Thus, to determine how effective these PDs are was one of the objectives of this study.

3.7 Summary

This chapter provided relevant information on the context of the study and in particular how Ministry of Education (MoE) manages PD for its teachers in reference to the unique geographical history. It included sketches of the geographical context and the locations of schools and teachers as per divisions and districts. The roles and responsibilities of
MoE and its commitments towards quality education were also laid out. In the search for quality education, various reforms were undertaken by MoE. One of the reform goals was improvement of the quality of teachers through training incentives and capacity building. This resulted in MoE formulating a PD policy together with the establishment of the PDU. Hence, PD policy and the roles and responsibilities of the PDU were also presented in this chapter. This was deemed necessary since the PD policy forms the basis of the PD undertaken by the teachers and investigating its impact was the aim of this study. The next chapter, Chapter Four, provides the details of the research methodology adopted to undertake this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

The study explores the perceptions of teachers on professional development (PD) programmes at the two case study schools in Fiji. This chapter explains the research methodology and the research instruments used to collect data. It describes the two research instruments, document analysis and semi-structured interviews, as well as giving details regarding the methods chosen, data analysis process, reliability and validity of data collected and the ethics involved. In doing so, this chapter presents the justification for the methodological orientation adopted for the study.

4.1 Justification of research design

There is no single complete and correct way to obtain and classify educational research data, as numerous categorisations and foci exist. McMillan (2004) states that common categorisation is always based on whether research is done with a practical end in mind, what overall methodology is employed, and the kinds of questions that prompt the research. Depending on these factors, McMillan places research into two categories, qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative research emphasizes natural settings, understanding verbal narratives and flexible designs. There is more emphasis on understanding and meaning based on verbal narratives and observations rather than on numbers (Bryman, 2008). It involves the exploration of a social phenomenon to generate theory. Quantitative research, on the other hand, involves a more ‘scientific’ approach considered to be more objective; it is often connected with theory as the starting point, relishes things that can be counted, measured or otherwise quantified, and is justification oriented, rationalistic and verifying (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).
This study was deliberately designed to collect qualitative data, for qualitative analysis. Focusing on the phenomenological aspect of qualitative research allowed the study to incorporate teachers’ perceptions, both emotional and intellectual, about PD. The qualitative method was selected to reveal teachers’ stated perceptions concerning PD programmes. These perceptions of PD were developed from prior experiences during their professional careers. As a teacher and a Senior Education Officer (SEO), the researcher had personal experience and knowledge of secondary school PD programmes. This prior knowledge allowed the researcher to connect with the phenomena being studied and determine the method for the study. Using the qualitative process gave the study the method by which detailed descriptive interviews could occur. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that detailed description occurs when the reader knows enough which is needed to understand the findings. This technique allows the reader to conceptualise the data from both an emotional and an intellectual perspective.

4.2 Qualitative research

Creswell (2003) defines qualitative research as an enquiry useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. The phenomenon in this study is the PD programmes of the two case study schools. To know more about this phenomenon, the researcher asked the teachers both specific and open-ended questions in order to understand their perceptions. From the data, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the information by drawing on teachers’ perceptions and past research. According to Thakral (2011) and Barnard (2004) similar research has been conducted in Hong-Kong and Northeast Tennessee respectively, using the qualitative research design. Therefore, the researcher was confident with the adopted design.

Furthermore, Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006) emphasise that qualitative data are useful within the research setting because participants freely express their thoughts, perceptions and experiences in more detail in relation to the research topic. For instance, since the study’s primary focus is on teachers’ perceptions of PD, research participants have expressed their personal reflections in relation to their PD experience.
Thus, in order to obtain in-depth information on the research topic, the study incorporated some of the basic characteristics of a qualitative research paradigm. These include conducting fieldwork, where the researcher visits the selected site and research participants in order to conduct the interviews in the interviewees’ natural setting (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this study, the researcher visited the two case study schools to conduct the fieldwork. Secondly, data collected are made in-depth by placing emphasis on the researcher’s understanding of the subjects’ point of view and the interaction with the studied group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). One way that makes it possible to obtain in-depth data is to use a case study approach. Hence, the researcher has investigated the teachers’ perceptions of PD by the case study approach.

4.3 Case study

A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident (Yin, 2003). It is a detailed examination of one setting, a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). The phenomenon under study here was teachers’ perception of PD in the two case study schools. This type of case study assists the researcher to learn more about a little-known phenomenon because all of the researcher’s time and resources are put into gaining an in-depth understanding of the case.

According to a number of researchers such as Bell (1999), Bogden and Biklen (2007), and Williamson (2000) listening, observing, and forming a rapport with research informants are seen as important skills for undertaking qualitative research. The data collected give a sound reflection of the reality and are derived right from the source. As such these ideas were considered important for this research as the phenomenon undertaken needed such skills to collect useful data relating to the PD programmes. Moreover, Burns (1997) states that case studies allow investigations to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events.
According to Stake (1995) a case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances. Case studies provide insights into other similar situations and cases, thus assisting in the interpretation of other similar cases. However, the results may not be generalisable except where other readers or researchers see their application (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Similarly the researcher considered these views valid and therefore the findings of this study have not been generalised.

4.4 Research Instruments

Research instruments are an important part in the process of research. These are ways and means by which researchers are able to gather information relevant to the research problem to be investigated. Researchers employ a number of different types of research instrument in gathering information to address the specific research problems. Vaus (1995) states that a variety of research tools used to collect relevant data needed for the study: questionnaire surveys, interviews, observations and documentary analysis provide a rich information data base for qualitative study. For Patton (2002), the data for qualitative analysis typically come from fieldwork, during which the researcher spends time in the setting under study – a programme, an organisation, a community, or whatever situations of importance to a study can be observed, people interviewed and documents analysed.

The tools selected in the study are based on their relevance in getting the best possible responses from the participants in order to address the research questions. The aims of the research tools are to obtain a range of responses to enable the researcher to fulfil the objectives of the study and to provide answers to the research questions (Bell, 2005). Moreover, seeking documentary information and observation are commonly used in case studies (Yin, 2003). Observation and interviews have been widely used by qualitative researchers as they provide a genuine look into the soul of another (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In regard to questionnaire survey, Cohen and others (2007) explain that a questionnaire provides anonymity to its respondents; hence it encourages them to
provide honest responses to the questions asked. For the purpose of this study, looking at the nature of the research questions posed and the phenomenon under study, open-ended semi-structured interview and document analysis were considered appropriate. Other researchers have previously used such research tools in similar studies regarding teacher PD (Darling-Hammond, 1994). This leads to the discussion of each research tool employed to gather the data.

### 4.4.1 Interview

Interviewing is a specified form of communication between consenting people for a specific purpose associated with some agreed subject matter. Therefore, the interview is a highly purposeful task that goes beyond ordinary conversation and involves several approaches (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). This study used a type of interview called the interview guide approach or semi-structured open-ended interview. In an interview guide approach, topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance in outline form, and the interviewer decides sequence and wordings (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

The participants in the study were involved in interviews that occurred during non-teaching hours or after school. These interviews were approximately one hour in length and focused on seven semi-structured open-ended interview questions. The interview questions were written in English because the participants’ official language of communication used in the workplace is English. The researcher asked additional questions for clarity and accuracy of the responses. With permission from the participants, the interviews were recorded on a digital recorder to maintain accurate findings. At the conclusion of the interviews, member checking was used. Lincoln and Guba (1985) uphold member checking as a crucial technique for establishing credibility; it allows the respondent an opportunity to assess intentions, correct errors, and volunteer additional information. Each participant was assured that the responses to the interview questions would remain confidential. The transcribed data were subjected to qualitative analysis through the process of coding, which allowed categories and themes to be derived from the actual data.
Development of the Interview Guide

Based on the researcher’s experience and the review of literature, the researcher had prior knowledge of the subject under study, which equipped him well to undertake the interview process to collect data. The aim was to collect a wide-range of experiences and knowledge of PD programmes teachers undergo. Broken into various segments, the interviews contained questions concerning the following concepts: current perceptions of PD, knowledge and skills gained to have an impact on students’ learning, the impact on apprentice teachers and experienced teachers, and the challenges faced in regard to PD. In the process of capturing the required concepts, interview questions (Appendix B) were designed and used as the interview guide. Prior to implementing the research several educators with various backgrounds and experience levels were provided the interview protocol to assess the validity of the interview questions. Educators were asked to assess each question to ensure clarity and validity. The individuals who participated in the assessment were not subsequently involved in the actual study.

4.4.2 Documentary analysis

Documents are defined as written texts (Hall, 2009). Documentary analysis was chosen as one of the research instruments for this study as it was an unobtrusive method that provided stable data that can be reviewed repeatedly (Yin, 2003). This research instrument also has the advantage of providing broad coverage of information on PD experienced by the teachers in the school investigated (Hall, 2009; Yin, 2003).

According to McMillan (2004) triangulation is necessary in qualitative research as it enhances the credibility of the data. Triangulation provides other means of verifying data, allowing one to use multiple approaches to investigate. Thus as well as interviews, documents associated with school PD were also examined, which included consulting the FEMIS and the FESA data bases.

The use of document analysis helped to verify all of the PD programmes attended by the teachers that were mentioned during the interview sessions. This supported Yin’s (2009)
assertion that documents are very helpful in verifying information and is also able to provide specific details to validate information from other sources.

4.5 Population sample

This study involved the population of teachers from two secondary schools employed in Fiji in 2014. Two schools were selected to provide data to the study, with variation in school population, demographics, and funding. Teachers selected for this study included male and female experienced and apprentice teachers. The sampling technique used was a purposive sampling technique. Maximum variation was used to select for a wide range of variation along dimensions of interest amongst the participants. Principals were asked to select the participants from their schools. Principals were given the access to the script to be used, allowing them to make decisions as to which teachers would ensure that the variables requested were met in the research. Thus the participants were likely to be information-rich in the area that was being studied (Barnard, 2004). Use of this technique helped ascertain that subgroups of teachers being represented. Participants were selected from both schools, with a total of thirty individuals taking part in the research study. The amount of teaching experience was taken into consideration when selecting the fifteen teachers from each school. The group of teachers selected contained apprentice teachers as well as experienced teachers, an arrangement allowing for two viewpoints on each school’s PD programmes: one teacher who was familiar with the PD programmes and one who was new to the school system.

The two schools selected for the case study were both in Vanua Levu, one of them rural and the other urban. The researcher, Vanua Levu born and having spent his primary and secondary school days there, purposively selected the schools from there. The familiarity with the environment and context of the research was an added advantage to the researcher.

Since the study focuses on the teachers’ perceptions of PD, the teacher population of the two case study schools had been analysed in terms of gender, qualifications and experience, using the 2014 FESA data base. This was done for two reasons; first, to make sure the sample consists of males and females, experienced and apprentice
teachers with different qualifications; secondly, to verify the sample the school principals had selected to make sure it was representative of what was requested.

4.5.1 Rural Case Study School

Population

The rural case study school had a total roll of 490 students with 29 teachers. The teachers consisted of 55% male and 45% female. Among the 29 teachers, 15 had a diploma, 13 a degree and 1 had postgraduate qualifications. Thirteen had 1–3 years of teaching experience, 4 had 4–7 years, 10 had 8–15 years and 2 had more than 15 years (MoE, 2014b).

Sample

From the rural case study school, 15 teachers were selected for the study, which represented 52% of the total population of teachers in the school. Of the teachers selected for the study, 53% were male and 47% were female. From those 15 teachers, 40% were apprentice teachers and 60% were experienced teachers.

4.5.2 Urban case study school

Population

The urban case study school had a total roll of 887 students with 49 teachers. The teachers consisted of 49% male and 51% female. Of the 49 teachers, 1 had a certificate, 17 had a diploma, 29 had a degree and 2 had postgraduate qualifications. Ten had 1–3 years of teaching experience, 12 had 4–7 years, 22 had 8–15 years and 5 had over 15 years (MoE, 2014b).

Sample

The 15 teachers selected for the study from the urban case study school represented 31% of the total population of teachers in the school. From the teachers selected for the study, 33% were male and 67% were female. Of those 15 teachers, 27% were apprentice teachers and 73% were experienced teachers.
Looking at the sample size in totality, of the 30 participants, 43% were males and 57% were females. Categorising into apprentice and experienced teachers indicated 33% apprentice and 67% experienced teachers taking part in the study.

4.6 Data analysis

After transcription of the interviews, individual participants checked and initialled the transcript. The second stage of data analysis was coding. Lofland, and others (2006) described coding as process of sorting your data into various categories that organise it and render it meaningful from the vantage point of one or more frameworks or sets of ideas. As suggested by Bryman (2008), coding needs to be done as soon as possible as it sharpens your understanding of your data. Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh and Sorensen (2006) suggest the use of a framework for analysis, referring to the set of concepts identified from the literature that are used as codes. Once the categorical analysis was done, the researcher was able to identify emerging categories where items with similar coding were placed together. Finally, from there the researcher began to explore the relationship between the different categories and identify the major themes that had emerged. This categorising of the data was essential in determining the correlations between the interviews. This process allowed for further grouping of related information from various participants to answer the research questions. After coding the data, the researcher noted particular themes that were derived from the various responses.

4.7 Validity and reliability

Researchers need to be cautious of the validity and reliability of the data collected. According to McMillan (2004) qualitative research relies heavily on how the researcher interprets the observations, behaviours, interviews and so on. Thus the researcher’s subjectivity and bias may have an effect on the credibility of the research. Detailed field notes when partaking in, for example, observations, interviews and accurate analysis of associated documents help enhance reliability. However, to ensure that the meanings, categories and interpretations of the researcher reflect the reality of the situation, the
following precautions were considered during the data collection process to increase the credibility of research (McMillan, 2004):

1. the conceptual and theoretical framework of the study should be clear
2. the method of selecting participants should be clear
3. the degree of researcher involvement in the setting should be indicated
4. field notes should contain detailed objective descriptions of just about everything
5. the credibility of the research should be addressed
6. descriptions should be separate from interpretations
7. the researcher should use multiple methods of data collection
8. the study should be long enough.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher ensured that all the requirements stated by McMillan (2004) were fulfilled to make the research valid and reliable. Detailed explanations on the importance of the researcher’s using multiple methods of data collection to make the research valid and reliable are stipulated in the following section.

4.8 Triangulation

To ensure the validity of data collected in qualitative studies, it is a common practice for researchers to use methodological triangulation. According to Cohen and others (2007) triangulation refers to the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. For this research study, the researcher chose to use two research instruments, document analysis and one-to-one interviews. In addition to methodological triangulation, this research study also used data source triangulation wherein the participants interviewed were asked the same questions but responses gathered varied as they had different views from the questions asked. The teachers’ personal and teaching experience seemed to have been influential in generating variety in responses. For the purpose of this research, both the experienced and apprentice
teachers were used to get responses from different experience levels, to achieve data source triangulation within the sample of participants.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues were taken into consideration throughout the course of this study. In general, the literature stresses the importance of adopting a set of ethical procedures and principles. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996) ethical research involves getting the informed consent of the participants or those from whom you will take materials. It involves reaching agreements about the uses of this data and how its analysis will be reported and disseminated. And it is about keeping to such agreements when they have been reached.

This research study complied with the ethical requirements in the following ways:

- the use of an information sheet to provide participant information pertaining to this research study (Appendix B)
- the use of a consent form for the participants who were interviewed (Appendix C)
- approval from MoEHA Research and Ethics Council (Appendix E)
- participant checking of the transcript to verify the information before it was used as data in this research study
- suppression of the identities of the participants in this study. Instead, a special code was assigned to each of them, to protect their true identity.

Overall, the application of each research instrument (interviews and document analysis) was securely bounded by ethical consideration. Added to that, the confidentiality of the respondents and the institution were ensured at all times. The researcher, after careful study of the guidelines for qualitative research, used it as a guide for this study.

4.10 Summary

This chapter has provided important information about the research methodology that was adopted for the study. It has given justification for the research methodology and the
research instruments used to collect data. The description of the two research instruments, document analysis and semi-structured interviews, was also provided. It also has presented the details regarding the triangulation, data analysis process, reliability and validity of data collected, together with the care taken with ethical considerations. In doing so, the chapter provided the justification for the methodological orientation adopted for the study. This leads to the next chapter, Chapter Five, which presents the research findings.
CHAPTER FIVE

Research Findings

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study. The qualitative data for the study were collected through interviews and document analysis. The findings of the study are presented under suitable headings derived from the research questions posed. There are two major headings: the document analysis and the interview findings. Under the document analysis, the PD undertaken by schools and MoE are outlined. For the interview findings, data have been analysed under various themes which emerged from the data. The themes include: experience of effective PDs, what makes PD effective, impact of PD on student learning, and factors to consider for a successful PD session. Additionally, the findings include the impact of PD on apprentice and experienced teachers, the factors that affect the effectiveness of PD, and the challenges in regard to PD.

5.1 Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collected through documents and interviews are analysed and presented in the sections which follow.

5.1.1 Document Analysis

School organised PD

The PD sessions organised by the two case study schools have been registered with PDU and are listed in Table 5.1.
### Table 5.1: School organised PD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Case Study School</th>
<th>Urban Case Study School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Emphasis on Teaching</td>
<td>1. STIs and Aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers as Positive Role Models</td>
<td>2. Corruption, Laws, Crimes (FICAC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ways students misbehave and what teachers can do about it</td>
<td>3. Dengue Fever Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Test induction program</td>
<td>4. Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Seven Rules for handling difficult students</td>
<td>5. Emergency Evacuation (Fire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Twenty tips on motivating students</td>
<td>7. Children’s Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How to deal with slow learners</td>
<td>8. Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ten ways to motivate your child to learn</td>
<td>9. Positive Reinforcements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Improvement strategies</td>
<td>12. Banking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. A good leader today will be a great leader tomorrow</td>
<td>14. Classroom management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Continuous assessment</td>
<td>15. Punctuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The perfect teacher</td>
<td>16. Athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Secrets for a successful teaching career</td>
<td>17. Child Abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Revision strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Evaluation plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Stress Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Appearance of the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Assessments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Guide to an effective teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Discipline Web</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. ESRI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. BEST Program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Code of Ethics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MoE (2014c)
The Table 5.1 reports that 28 PDs were registered by the rural case study school and 17 in the urban case study. The PDs registered by the rural case study school mostly focused on learning and teaching and classroom effectiveness. The urban school PDs focused mostly on the whole school and external factors influencing student learning.

**MoE organised PD**

The MoE organised PD for both the case study schools which has been registered with the PDU are listed in Table 5.2.

### Table 5.2: MoE organised PD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rural Case Study School</th>
<th>Urban Case Study School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Careers Teachers and Principals Workshop</td>
<td>1. Careers Teachers and Principals Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. NCF Workshop</td>
<td>2. NCF Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. VosaVaka-Viti</td>
<td>3. VosaVaka-Viti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coaching and Officiating Athletics</td>
<td>4. Coaching and Officiating Athletics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conversational language workshop</td>
<td>5. Conversational language workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Family Life Education, Counselling, Sexual Offences, Drugs</td>
<td>6. Family Life Education, Counselling, Sexual Offences, Drugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Education in Human Values</td>
<td>8. Education in Human Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Internal Assessment Moderation</td>
<td>10. Internal Assessment Moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. NCF Y9 Music Workshop</td>
<td>11. NCF Y9 Music Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. NCF English Workshop</td>
<td>12. NCF English Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. NCF Syllabi Trial Workshop</td>
<td>15. NCF Syllabi Trial Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. NCF Y9 Physical Education</td>
<td>16. NCF Y9 Physical Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 5.2 it is evident that the PD sessions organised by the MoE are the same for both schools regardless of their locality. For the 33 PDs registered with the PDU under both case study schools, MoE PD concentrates on curriculum, assessment and training for teachers, future school leaders and school principals.

### 5.1.2 Interview findings

The main data collection tool was the interview. Thirty teachers were interviewed from the two case study schools, fifteen from the rural and fifteen from the urban schools. The interviews from the two schools are analysed separately but under the same identified themes. Some typical responses of the participants are included under the identified themes.
5.1.2.1 Rural case study school

Theme 1: Experience of effective PDs

All 15 participants from the rural case study school had at least some experience of effective PD programmes. When the participants were asked to share feelings about some of the effective PD sessions they had experienced, the majority (87%) shared experiences similar to the ones demonstrated:

*My experiences of effective PDs; well teachers shared PDs on different topics. One teacher presented on ‘Teacher as positive role model’. Another one was on ‘How to tackle discipline problems’. (T2, 2014)*

*Effective PD experience for me was when we sat together as a group; shared ideas with each other on ‘How to improve teaching and learning’. (T3R, 2014)*

*The most effective PD experience for me which I can think of was on ‘How to deal with students’ misbehaviour’. (T15, 2014)*

According to the responses the teachers’ experience of effective PD involved PD that talked about learning and teaching and the sessions that were student related.

Theme 2: What makes PD effective?

When the participants were asked why those sessions mentioned were so effective, most (87%) of the comments were similar to the ones illustrated:

*After learning about tackling indiscipline by being a positive role model and using positive reinforcement on students, students’ discipline improved and I was able to improve students’ learning. (T2R, 2014)*

*The group discussion: It made it easier for us to communicate with each other and get more ideas and whatever we had discussed we tried to implement it in the teaching and learning in the classroom. In this way we improved our teaching and learning. (T3R, 2014)*

*It was practical because I have to deal with misbehaviour of students every day. If I’m able to improve students’ behaviour, I will be able to improve their performance. (T15, 2014)*
According to the participants the important factors for deciding whether the PD was effective or not was its contribution towards improving students’ learning. If it had a positive impact on student learning then the participants felt it was effective.

**Theme 3: Impact of PD on student learning**

When participants were asked how the knowledge and skills gained had affected their students’ learning, almost all (93%) of the responses were very similar to the ones exemplified in the following comments:

*When the professional development was held we actually learnt something more enhancing. The students benefit from the PD sessions because the PD sessions equip me better to go and meet the needs of the students in the class.* (T4R, 2014)

*We have seen a vast improvement in them, especially when we group them, give them extra worksheets, extra tasks, and then taking up and marking, it is seen that their performance improved.* (T8R, 2014)

*PD sessions remind us that there are better ways to teach. But not only that, we learn other aspects of teaching so when we go back to our students, we tend to change teaching method. I think it has an impact on the way they learn and how the students respond to us and finally students are more motivated to learn. We can say that students enjoy learning.* (T11R, 2014)

According to the responses, PD sessions make a difference to student achievements. Teachers’ increasing knowledge and skills contribute to improved student learning.

**Theme 4: Factors to consider for successful PD**

When the participants were asked what makes the PD sessions successful, almost all (93%) of the participants talked about factors similar to the ones demonstrated in these comments:

*The best thing about these PD sessions is one which deals with our daily happening; meaning to say which are practical. Example, STIs, by this we are informing the students how to live a responsible life because they are also taught in form 4 Basic Science and also taught in family life.* (T2R, 2014)

*For the preparation of exam papers, the best thing about that session is that it reminds us of what we have lost track of over time, just to help our kids because*
sometimes we pick questions just from the FJC papers which use big words. (T6R, 2014)

Good PDs are the ones which are on subject matters, in my case an Industrial Arts teacher and when the PD sessions like the workshops are conducted then it is good. I am aware of the changes which are brought about in our department and whatever we were supposed to be doing in our department as I am the HOD. The more informative one is the one conducted by Ministry of Education. (T7R, 2014)

According to the participants there are some very important factors to consider for successful PD. They include its relevance to the daily life and students’ learning. It also should be practical and should give new knowledge. Participants also stipulated that the PD must be needs based.

**Theme 5: PD for apprentice teachers**

When the participants were asked whether the PD sessions were adequate for apprentice teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills, the majority (87%) of the participants said yes and gave justifications similar to the ones included:

*Yes, for me PDs have made me a better teacher. I have learnt a lot from my seniors. When we come from Universities, we just have the subject knowledge which I feel is not enough. We come across a lot of situations in the classroom, and we should know how to handle.* (T8R, 2014)

*Yes, having PDs fortnightly is good, helps me face classroom challenges better. I have realised that my students have less discipline problems now when compared to before.* (T10R, 2014)

*Yes, being a new teacher I always wait for PD sessions because I know that I will get to learn a lot of things from the facilitators. It has helped me to start to enjoy my work.* (T14R, 2014)

According to the responses, the majority of the participants felt apprentice teachers undergo adequate PDs. Participants mentioned that they learn a lot from the facilitators or their seniors. It helps them to improve their teaching and classroom management.
Theme 6: PD for experienced teachers

When the participants were asked whether the PD sessions were adequate for experienced teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills, the majority (87%) of the experienced teachers interviewed said yes and gave explanations similar to the ones demonstrated:

Yes, as old teachers we have to keep on learning new things like technologies to be of the standard expected of us. PDs help us a lot otherwise there is no other place to learn from due to other commitments we have in life. (T2R, 2014)

Yes, though we are experienced teachers, but at times we overlook. We think we know everything because we are long in the field. But teachers are coming up with different topics and whoever goes for any workshop will come back and share it with other teachers, so in that way we all benefit, the experienced and the new graduates. (T9R, 2014)

Yes, whether it is experienced or apprentice teachers, we all are learning through PDs. It keeps us up to date with the latest development. Policies are changing so with it methods of teaching also change. PDs keep us updated. (T11R, 2014)

According to the participants’ responses the majority found that experienced teachers undergo adequate PDs. Participants commented that whether it is apprentice or experienced teachers, all need PD to grow and keep themselves updated with the latest developments in education.

Theme 7: Factors that affect the effectiveness of PD

When the participants were asked what makes a PD session ineffective, it was found that most (87%) of the participants’ comments were similar to the ones presented:

In our case it’s almost one hour every week, we take recess time and we shorten the period. Sometimes the 4th period is affected. (T1R, 2014)

Like for our school, we have every Wednesday. But if new ideas or new types of PD are presented then it might be good. The more the better, provided we learn something new. (T4R, 2014)

If topics can be identified so that appropriate PDs are undertaken. All schools should have a plan which should be prepared in consultation with the teachers. We should have our suggestions as to what PDs we require to up skill ourselves. (T14R, 2014)
According to the responses some of the factors that make PD sessions ineffective include content, timing and selection of topics. According to some participants, the school should have a PD plan which should be made in consultation with the teachers.

**Theme 8: Challenges of PD**

When the participants were asked what challenges they face in regard to PD, all (100%) of the participants’ comments were similar to the ones demonstrated below:

*If more resources could be available to us, so that we can have better understanding and it could be interesting to use.*  (T2R, 2014)

*We lack resources; multimedia, showing actual videos, things like this will make it interesting.*  (TR5, 2014)

*I am told to do the PD, but we cannot do it properly because recess time is very short for PD and we don’t have proper resources. Another problem is that we are unable to get experts to take PD because we are very far from them.*  (T13R, 2014)

According to the participants the challenges faced by teachers in their school included lack of resources, lack of time for PD during school hours and inability to get experts to facilitate PDs because of their distance from experts’ bases.

**5.1.2.2 Urban case study school**

**Theme 1: Experience of effective PDs**

All 15 participants from the rural case study school had at least some experience of effective PDs. When the participants were asked to share some of the effective PD sessions they had experienced, most (87%) shared experiences similar to the ones demonstrated:

*I can recall the interesting PD which was on ‘AIDS and NCDs’. Guest speakers were invited and it was very educational. We were able learn a lot of new things and share with our students to prepare them for the outside world.*  (T3U, 2014)

*I attended one on ‘Family life education’, where we talked about so many things like public health, sexual transmitted infections and how we can impact our students’ life in the classroom to bring down the numbers that is escalating.*
Another one was ‘How to approach students while dealing with discipline problems’. (T5U, 2014)

One good experience was when FICAC took their PD on the financial prudence. Even though the code of ethics of teachers is there, they shared some of the cases they deal with. They reminded us how to be in public as a public figure and how to behave. (T8U, 2014)

According to the participants, effective PDs involve content that provides new information to teachers. Comments by participants also indicated that PD which concerns their daily life is more effective. This allowed them to share with their students and prepare them holistically.

**Theme 2: What makes PD effective?**

When the participants were asked why those sessions they had mentioned were so effective to them, the majority (80%) of the comments were similar to the ones illustrated:

*Those PDs helped me learn new things. I learnt various strategies to deal with students; to group them, give extra worksheets, spend more time with them even during recess and lunch breaks and also be role models.* (T3U, 2014)

*It was effective because I learnt new things. One person was here from the Judicial, he told us about so many things which I was not aware of.* (T6U, 2014)

*Like the presentation on fire drills which was done by the Fire authority people. As a teacher I have learnt so many things. During natural disasters, what to do when coming across with such circumstances.* (T8U, 2014)

According to the responses, effective PDs are those that provided new knowledge and involved hands-on experience. Participants also highlighted the value of learning from the experts themselves.

**Theme 3: Impact of PD on student learning**

When participants were asked how the knowledge and skills gained had impacted their students’ learning, almost all (93%) of the responses were very similar to the ones exemplified:
It has impacted my students’ learning. For me, we have different levels of students in the class. It’s easy for me to handle the students after learning new skills and doing group work, helps them to learn more. All these help me be a better teacher so students learn better. (T6U, 2014)

For me, professional development has given me professional guidance. It has provided positive learning experience and it has helped me learn to motivate the students in a positive way. This keeps them motivated and they learn better. (T13U, 2014)

I’m a language and Social Science teacher so my subject content involves everything. Professional development helps me grow and it allows me to guide my students better. (T15U, 2014)

According to the participants, through PDs they are able to build on their knowledge and skills, which helps them guide the students better. Hence, through proper guidance students are able to learn better.

**Theme 4: Factors to consider for a successful PD session**

When the participants were asked what makes the PD sessions successful, the majority (87%) of the participants talked about factors similar to the ones demonstrated in these comments:

*We had hands-on experience when teachers planned to collect the rubbish one Saturday. Teachers went out to do the cleanup. This way we were able to set examples to our students and the community. I feel this made it a great success.* (T3U, 2014)

*Practical; like fire authority, we were told how to hold the hose how to use the fire extinguishers. Experiencing it myself, I was able to learn better. For this reason I feel practical experience results in a successful PD.* (T5U, 2014)

*PD is successful if right people present. For us, organisations that are related to our teaching and learning are also invited to present. The content of what they present, the timing and our convenient computer lab with projector contributes towards PDs success.* (T15U, 2014)

According to the responses the factors to consider for successful PD are that it should: provide practical experience, well planned, good timing, be in the right environment with appropriate facilities, and have the right content.
**Theme 5: PD for apprentice teachers**

When the participants were asked whether the PD sessions were adequate for apprentice teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills, almost all (93%) said yes and gave justifications similar to the ones included:

*Yes, because when the facilitator presents, they first explain then we do activities in groups. This way we learn from each other. I am able to learn ways to improve the teaching in the classroom. All of us benefit; experienced teachers and apprentice teachers.* (T8U, 2014)

*Yes, at first I had very little understanding of PD but as time went past I realised how important it was. As a new teacher, I thought it was a waste of time but when dealing with students, I found it useful.* (T9U, 2014)

*Yes, surely because when it comes to PD sessions our facilitators are experienced and they deliver through experience. Surely as an apprentice teacher I have learnt a lot from them which has helped me while teaching and dealing with students.* (T13U, 2014)

According to the responses of the participants, a large majority of them felt that apprentice teachers undergo adequate PD. They commented that PDs help apprentice teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. Participants have also revealed that they learn a lot from the facilitators and experienced teachers through PDs, which helps them improve their teaching and classroom management.

**Theme 6: PD for experienced teachers**

When the participants were asked whether the PD sessions were adequate for experienced teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills, the majority (83%) of the experienced teachers interviewed said yes and gave explanations similar to the ones demonstrated:

*Yes, most of the experienced teachers like me are learning about fire, dengue fever and right now dengue fever is relevant, about the PSC code of Ethics. When we go over these things it reminds us. So we still are learning.* (T4U, 2014)

*Yes, whether it is an apprentice teacher or experienced teacher, I see that all benefit from the PDs. I still remember when I learnt about self-appraisal at the beginning of my teaching career, till today I carry out that to see how much I
have improved. I know I am able to improve when I attend a lot of PDs and I am able to experiment it with my students. (T5U, 2014)

Yes, the new teachers they come directly from the tertiary institutions and they are absorbed in to the school system and they need to learn more in the school system so that they can function in school. For experienced teachers as well, we too are learning as well because education never ends and we continue to learn every day something new. It is useful for the experienced teachers too. (T7U, 2014)

According to the responses, whether they be apprentice or experienced teachers, all need PD to grow. It was also stated by some participants that they used self-appraisal to assess the effect of PD on themselves.

**Theme 7: Factors that affect the effectiveness of PD sessions**

When the participants were asked what makes a PD session ineffective, most (87%) of the participants’ comments were similar to the ones presented below:

*Previously years back, teachers only had 10 minutes of PD during recess break which I think did not have sufficient time and now since it has been made compulsory, that it should be of 1 hour period it’s good.* (T17, 2014)

*First of all, we are taking PD in the morning sessions, during recess and during our staff briefing. One thing I must say, it is affecting our class time because sometimes we are late to go in to the class. Other things which affect are: type of presentation, continuous for long and too much talking only makes it boring.* (T6U, 2014)

*The content knowledge of the speakers and the way they present is important. At times the speakers come and they cannot talk properly and some of the speakers they cannot give all the details of the things that we want.* (T14U, 2014)

According to the responses of the participants the factors that affect the effectiveness of PD sessions include timing, presenter, type of delivery and content knowledge.

**Theme 8: Challenges of PD**

When the participants were asked what challenges they face in regard to PD, almost all (93%) of the participants’ comments were similar to the once demonstrated below:

*Challenge is looking for facilitators, when we want external facilitators we have to persuade them to come.* (T5U, 2014)
When outsiders come and present, they take a lot of time and teaching time is wasted. (T8U, 2014)

Ministry doesn’t allow PD during school hours so PD needs to be done after school hours and we all need to rush home because we have to travel far. (T13U, 2014)

According to the participants the challenges faced by teachers in their school included difficulty in finding external facilitators and timing of the PD.

5.3 Summary

This chapter has provided details of the findings of the present study gathered from the two data sources, namely document analysis and interviews. The findings of the two case study schools were presented separately under suitable headings derived from the data collected from the interviews. The next chapter, Chapter Six, discusses the research findings in relation to the two sub questions and the principal research question.
CHAPTER SIX

Discussion of the Findings

6.0 Introduction

The study focuses on the teachers’ perceptions of PD. This chapter discusses the findings of the study as reported in Chapter Five. The discussion integrates the thematic findings with the literature from chapter two. The discussions are presented under the sub-heading of the principal research question and the two sub questions. Also towards the end of the chapter, discussions on the key findings of the study are presented.

The principal research question and the sub questions are restated below:

What are teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes?

a) What are teachers’ perceptions regarding the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching?

b) What do apprentice and experienced teachers perceive of the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills?

On the basis of the analysis of the data, the findings of the two sub questions are discussed first to help support the findings of the principal research question which are discussed later. Discussions for each question are placed under the relevant themes which were derived from the data as in chapter 5.
6.1 What are teachers’ perceptions regarding the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching?

6.1.1 Impact of PD on student learning

The analysis of the data illustrates that PDs make a significant difference to student learning. Teachers are emphatic that increasing knowledge and skills contribute towards student learning. Sharing ‘success stories’ with their colleagues and experimenting the new practices themselves has enabled them to see changes in their students’ learning. The findings are well supported by Barnard (2004) who claims that it is vital that teachers’ perceptions have an effect in implementing the latest theory being provided in PD sessions. The findings also reveal that if teachers believed that the new strategies learnt would enhance student learning, they incorporate them into their own teaching. This also is echoed by Desimone (2009) who assert that if teachers recognise the importance of the PD as it applied to the curriculum and their classrooms, they are much more likely to implement these new techniques.

The teachers interviewed in this study also stated that PD has indirectly impacted their students’ learning. PD sessions have built confidence in their teaching and also helped in decision making in the classroom. The findings are well supported by Gabriel and colleagues (2011) who state that teachers should have a variety of content knowledge that allows them to teach all students effectively. Teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly, so that they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate ideas to one another, and address misconceptions. This will help teachers to connect ideas across fields and to everyday life.

6.1.2 Factors that affect the effectiveness of PD sessions

The findings of the study reveal that some factors are important for PDs to have an effect on student learning. These factors include content, timing and selection of PD and the presenter. The literature provides support for the importance of timing (Guskey 1996; Sharma, 2012) stating that lack of time allocation for presentation of PD
programmes made it useless and unworthy. The other two factors the participants consider important are content and selection of PD. This finding agrees with the assertion made by Guskey (2000) that one of the most significant factors that contribute to the effectiveness of any teacher’s PD is the strong focus on student learning. This also is echoed by Fullan (2007) who asserts that if there is no evidence of teachers using what was learnt in the PD to link to their own work in the classroom context then it can only be termed ineffective.

6.2 What do apprentice and experienced teachers perceive of the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills?

6.2.1 PD for apprentice teachers

On the basis of the analysis of the data most teachers were searching for something different within their professional careers. Throughout the interviews apprentice teachers expressed their desires to become better teachers in the classrooms. The apprentice teachers commented repeatedly that PD helped apprentice teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills. They also revealed that they learn a lot from the facilitators and experienced teachers through PD, which helps them improve their teaching and classroom management. These findings here confirm with the assertion made by Solomon (2009) that apprentice teachers are just beginning their development and they need support to grow. Similarly, this also is echoed by Hargreaves (1997) and Sharma (2012) who assert that it should not be taken for granted for beginning teachers that on graduation day they are fully prepared for learning and teaching for the rest of their career.

6.2.2 PD for experienced teachers

The analysis of the data illustrates that the experienced teachers are in the stabilisation stage and are more concerned about improving their knowledge in subject areas with incoming technologies and learning new teaching styles. They are interested in learning
about new policies and new reforms, and it is also noted that teachers mentioned that self-reflective and improvement for teachers had helped assess change within them. This is supported by MoE (2014e) which states the teacher who is a reflection practitioner uses that learning to increase professional knowledge and skills to the benefit of not only himself/herself but more importantly, the students. The honest reflection (self-assessment) is the best evidence to prove whether PD has brought about improvement within them. This is also echoed by Lingam (2012) who asserts that reflection encourages teachers to become aware of their thoughts (intellect) and feelings (affect) which relate to a particular learning experience or area of practice.

6.3 What are teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes?

6.3.1 Experience of effective PDs

The analysis of the data illustrates that the rural case study school PDs are mostly different from those given for the urban case study school. The rural case study school offered PD mainly on learning and teaching and classroom effectiveness. On the other hand, PD in the urban case study school focused mostly on the whole school and the external factors influencing student learning. The findings of this research study have highlighted that participants favoured PDs that met their students’ needs. This is well supported by Sharma (2012) who states that rural school students need more support in learning and teaching due to limited resources. Therefore, teachers in the rural schools need more PD on learning and teaching to enhance their knowledge and skills to better facilitate learning.

6.3.2 What makes PD effective?

On the basis of the data analysis the teachers’ responses suggest several ways for improving PD to make it effective. The teachers’ responses provided practical confirmation of the literature on "best practice" in PD. For example, teachers indicated PD that focusing on academic subject matter (content), gives teachers opportunities for
"hands-on" work (active learning). Since it is integrated into the daily life of the school (coherence), it is more likely to enhance their knowledge and skills. These research findings are in agreement with Lingam (2012) who states that coherence of PD experienced with other practical experiences is linked to improved teaching practice. This is further echoed by Garet and colleagues (2001) who state that teachers who engage in joint PD are provided with the means and opportunity to integrate what they learn with other aspects of their instructional context, allowing teachers to enrich their knowledge and therefore their pedagogy and in turn maximise children’s learning outcomes.

6.3.3 Factors to consider for a successful PD session

The analysis of the data illustrates that throughout the interview process many participants referred to perceived factors such as the presenter, the timing, collective participation, and the appropriateness of the PD as the factors to be considered for successful PD sessions. Teachers perceived these factors to have a bearing on the effectiveness of the PD sessions. This finding concurs with the work of Desimone and colleagues (2002) in which the participants in their research express the importance of participation by stating that collegial learning strategies give teachers more opportunities to participate in active learning, thus promoting lifelong learning.

This research study illustrates that PD has a positive impact on teachers. The findings imply that PD for teachers is important as it helps to embrace the vision of the MoE, which is ‘Quality Education for Change, Peace and Progress.’ In general, teachers’ PD is viewed as a platform for professional learning. This is supported by Harris and colleagues (2011) who state that as teachers develop better content knowledge through participation in PD programmes, they become more confident in their own practice. The findings further reveal that teachers’ understanding of the subject is enhanced through communication, which is the sharing of ‘success stories’ and ideas among colleagues and the constructive feedback given by others. Fishman and others (2003) echo this when they emphasise that consequently, as the teachers develop better understanding of
the subject, they are better able to address the issues that their students face with the learning. The result will be better student understanding and thus better student achievement. Finally, teachers commented that the PD experience also had allowed them to keep up with the changes taking place in the education system and as a result it ensures that their teaching remains relevant to their students’ needs.

6.4 Key Findings

The summary of comments on specific themes for the two case study schools is presented in Table 6.1 and discussed.

Table 6.1: Summary of comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Summary of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Case Study School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of effective PDs</td>
<td>• Students’ discipline improved&lt;br&gt;• Improved learning and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes PD effective?</td>
<td>When it contributes towards improving student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of PD on student learning</td>
<td>Teachers’ increasing knowledge and skills contribute towards better student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors to consider for a successful PD session</td>
<td>Should:&lt;br&gt;• be relevant to everyday life&lt;br&gt;• improve student learning&lt;br&gt;• be practical&lt;br&gt;• give new knowledge&lt;br&gt;• be needs based&lt;br&gt;• encourage participation through sharing ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 6.1 there was little difference between the responses of the two case study schools in regard to the derived themes. The only major difference was for the theme: ‘experience of effective PDs.’ It was evident through the comments that the PD that was said to be effective for the rural case study school is different from those for the urban case study school. This was so because each school was undertaking PD sessions on the basis of its own needs. The similar analysis was shown by Table 5.1, where school based PDs were analysed for the two case study schools. According to the list for the rural case study school, the PDs focused for the most part on learning and teaching and classroom effectiveness, whereas, looking at the urban school’s PD sessions indicated they focused mostly on the whole school and the external factors influencing student learning. The teachers of the rural case study school felt that their resource limitations and distance from the central administrative offices mean it is difficult for their school to organise external PDs. This is supported by Villegas-Reimers (2003) who states that the major factor for rural school-based PDs is generally that of resources.
For the rural case study school, the school based PDs, which basically focus on learning and teaching as noted earlier, are mostly conducted by senior teachers of the school. This meant that the apprentice teachers are heavily dependent on the experienced teachers to gain new knowledge and skills. This in-house staff cooperation and mentoring is, of course, no bad thing. The urban case study school, though, has other sources to look into apart from the experienced teachers to facilitate PDs. The external PD, as the teachers of the urban case study school see it, allows for holistic development of a child. The urban case study teachers also mentioned their good fortune in having the right environment and facilities for successful PD. This is echoed by Guskey (1986) and Thakral (2011) who both assert that in the creation of an environment that promotes and motivates teachers’ active participation in the PD activities, modern technological resources play a crucial role as they save time and make presentations lively.

Looking at the factors that affect PD effectiveness produced the observation that the majority of the participants of the two case study schools mentioned the importance of the timing of the sessions. To undergo PDs in school during official hours becomes very difficult for the teachers because it affects teaching time. Therefore, PDs conducted during school hours were said to be ineffective because of time limitations. Teachers commented that a PD session had to be of very short duration, otherwise it went beyond the time limit and it affected teaching time. The ministry recommends that PDs in school must be held after school hours and must last for an hour or more in order to be accumulated and registered (MoE, 2014f). This is supported by Timperley and others (2007) who have arrived at the conclusion that teachers need to participate in longer PD to sustain more complex change to their practice.

Overall, the teachers’ perceptions of PD were that effective PD should improve student learning, be practical, give new knowledge, be needs based, be planned, have appropriate timing, and most importantly, be able to share knowledge.
6.4 Summary

This chapter provided the discussion of the findings of the study which focused on perceptions of teachers on PD, with links to the relevant literature base in Chapter Two. It has provided relevant discussion associated with the two sub questions; What are teachers’ perceptions regarding the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching? and what do apprentice and experienced teachers perceive of the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills? The discussion of the two sub questions in turn helped discuss and address the principal research question, What are teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes. The chapter has also provided discussion on the key findings of the study. Overall, the findings show positive impact of the PD programmes that have been implemented to sustain the apprentice and experienced teachers in Fiji, even though there are some areas of concern as discussed. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, concludes the study in reference to the key research findings, followed by suitable recommendations, research limitations and suggestion for future research.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion and Recommendations

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the discussion of the findings of the study which focused on the teachers’ perceptions of PD for the two case study schools. In the final chapter, on the basis of the analysis and discussion of the findings, the conclusions are presented under the two sub questions and the principal research questions. With the support of the sub questions, the principal research question is answered by presenting the overall conclusion. This is followed by the recommendations, research limitations and the suggestion for future research.

7.1 Conclusion

Referring to the analysis and discussion of the findings, the following conclusions are made on each of the research questions.

7.1.1 What are teachers’ perceptions regarding the impact of current PD programmes on learning and teaching?

The teachers interviewed in this study stated that PD had an impact on learning and teaching through their participation in PD programmes. After teachers attended the PD sessions they often reported they were more confident in their teaching, better in decision making, used the new knowledge and skills in their teaching, and improved their class management. All these factors had contributed towards improvement in the learning and teaching which was evident through teachers’ self-reflection.
7.1.2 What do apprentice and experienced teachers perceive of the current PD programmes in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills?

The findings suggest that teachers feel the apprentice and the experienced teachers can attend the same PD, provided it is planned well. To plan a good PD programme for the school and the MoE, whether it is for apprentice or experienced teachers, one should understand the appraisal process. Some of the participants shared their sense that the self-assessment had helped them by increasing their knowledge through their attendance at appropriate PD sessions. They mentioned being able to see improvement within themselves through reflection (self-appraisal). Reflection is a process that includes: looking back on a situation, pondering over it, learning from it, and using the new knowledge for improvement (MoE, 2014e). Reflection, which is learning through experiences, is not a new concept. As humans, we naturally reflect on our surroundings and experiences. However, the conscious, deliberate and ordered process of using reflection as a learning tool in one’s professional practice is much more challenging. It is a complex activity that requires the individual to develop a set of skills required for problem solving (Lingam, 2012).

The findings of the study are clear that some of the topics the PDs should focus on are basically, student learning and teaching, sharing ‘success stories’, appraisal processes, subject knowledge, classroom management and external PD that concerns everyday life. This would bring about holistic development within teachers and students. Findings also indicate that whether it is an apprentice teacher or an experienced teacher, all need PD sessions to bring about improvement. To embrace quality in our education system in Fiji, planned PD should be embraced.

As findings in Table 6.1 demonstrate, teachers’ perceptions of what makes effective PD are influenced by several factors. The participants judged that the most significant factor in effective PD is that the focus should be on student learning.
Overall, both the apprentice and the experienced teachers said that PD sessions carried out in the schools and those mounted by the MoE are adequate for acquiring new knowledge and skills related to their professional work.

7.1.3 Teachers’ perceptions of current PD programmes

PD for teachers enables them to become reflective practitioners as they become more aware and conscious of their own teaching practice (Lingam, 2012). Most importantly, teachers’ PD experience also allows them to keep up with the changes taking place in the education system and as a result ensures that their teaching practice remains relevant to their students’ needs (Aminudin, 2012). All teachers interviewed agreed that effective PD increases their knowledge and skills but acknowledged there are some challenges associated with effective PD. Some of the major challenges identified by the teachers in the case study schools were difficulty in finding appropriate time for PDs, trying to find experts for PD facilitation, and lack of resources.

Finally, the findings show that there is a lack of PD planning at the national level, which filters down through the districts to the school level. There should be a PD needs assessment done for Fiji, starting from the school to the district and then at national level so that a national strategic plan for PD is designed. This would initiate training and improve teacher knowledge. This is consistent with Guskey’s (1995) advice that schools begin any educational reform by taking small steps.

Overall, in this study teachers believe they need to work on improving their teaching continuously, to ensure that they are able to facilitate their students’ learning more effectively. The teachers’ perceptions of PD as indicated by Table 6.1 validate that; PD activities should improve student learning, be practical, give new knowledge, deliver content on the basis of needs, be planned, and should be held at appropriate times. Teachers communicating with each other and sharing ideas (itself a best practice) forms the foundation of any PD.

Through this study it is perceived that planning PD programmes through the appraisal process could help in improving teacher knowledge and thus improve student learning.
To improve quality of learning and teaching the PD process outlined in the recommendation could be initiated in Fiji.

### 7.2 Recommendations

The participants believed that PD for teachers needs to offer programmes designed to meet their specific needs. To start off, school heads should identify areas of need and organise PD sessions accordingly. The self-appraisal by the teachers could help in the planning of PD for the school if teachers are given the chance to contribute to the PD planning for their respective schools. According to the needs of the teachers, the school head could draw up a plan and organise PD programmes for the school.

The Figure 7.1 provides a schema of the PD process for effective PDs. This process, which could help in the planning and training at individual, school and national level, has been aligned to the ‘Conceptual Framework’ of this study.

**Figure 7.1: PD Process**

- Understand effective teaching standards
- Apply the appraisal process
- Analyse results
- Plan for PD
- Undertake PD
- Apply new learning into teaching
- Re-evaluate teaching effectiveness

### 7.3 Limitations of the study

Research limitations in this study were found to be not dissimilar to those in studies undertaken in other contexts. An obvious one with this study is its sample size restriction, as it is a case study of only two secondary schools. The small sample size
means it is not possible to generalise the findings of this study to a larger population. The results, though, suggest that it has value as a pilot study and are certainly indicative of the potential for undertaking another on a larger scale. Even at this small scale, extreme care and measures were taken to ensure the reliability of data collected and to protect the integrity of these research findings. This has involved the use of methodological triangulation and data source triangulation during the data collection process in the case study schools.

The time spent on data collection for this research study was limited by the geographic separation of the researcher and the participants throughout the normal school year. The researcher is based in Viti Levu while the case study schools are in Vanua Levu (these being the two major islands of Fiji). Because of the schools’ busy work schedule the researcher was able to spend only five working days in each school to collect data. Since the data collection was done during the normal teaching days, the participants’ busy schedules made it difficult. Although only two schools were studied, it was impossible to interview all the teachers. The time constraint meant that only 15 out of 29 (52%) from the rural school and 15 out of 49 (31%) from urban school could be interviewed, hence the findings may not be a complete representation of the teachers’ overall PD experience of the school. Also since the focus of this study was on the teachers’ perceptions on the overall PD experiences, they may vary according to the individual experience. The teachers’ perceptions of PD were the results of their combined personal experiences.

Finally, since the researcher is a Senior Education Officer (SEO), it is possible that some of the participants may have been reluctant to express their honest views openly even though they had volunteered to participate and a confidentiality agreement had been signed. Therefore, for the validity of the results, thirty participants were selected and the data were also verified through document analysis.

7.4 Future Research

There are two major suggestions for future research. First, this research study can be further extended to involve more schools to increase the validity and reliability of its
findings. It is recommended that teachers from remote island schools of Fiji are also included in the interests of adding their perceptions on the PD programmes, given their geographically constrained contextual circumstances. Improvements in national planning are dependent on the accuracy and detail of the varied contexts for which the programmes are catering.

Secondly, this study took place over only ten days (five days in each school) and mainly consisted of interviews. To gain a bigger and better picture of PD in the school, it should extend to a greater span of time so that teachers may directly draw on PD experiences. Observation with teachers interacting and participating in PD over a greater period of time can be recorded. Moreover if the researcher is able to observe and record teachers’ experiences when engaging in PD, and observe their classes consistently, the researcher would be able to develop a sense of whether knowledge and skills gained from PD were translated effectively in the classroom work.
References


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Information Sheet

Demographic Questionnaire for Professional Development

School Location: Rural or Urban ____________ Gender: Male/Female ____________

1.) What is the highest level of qualification received in your profession?

2.) What is your level of teaching experience?

3.) Approximately what is the number of hours that you have participated in professional development activities during the previous school year?

__________ Number of hours during the school day

__________ Number of hours outside of the school day
Appendix B: Interview Schedule

RESEARCH TITLE: Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development at Two Fijian Secondary Schools.

Interview Schedule:

1.) Think about some of the effective professional development sessions you have attended. What made these sessions effective to you?

2.) In reflecting on these effective professional development sessions, how has the knowledge and skills gained in these sessions impacted your students’ learning?

3.) In your view in what way are these sessions different from other professional development sessions that you have attended?

4.) Do you think your school or the Ministry of Education is providing adequate professional development to apprentice teachers and experienced teachers in terms of acquiring new knowledge and skills? Please justify your answer.

5.) Now I would like you to think about some of your least effective professional development sessions you have experienced. Explain why these sessions were least effective to you.

6.) What challenges do you face in regard to professional development in your school?

7.) What are your suggestions to further enhance professional development programmes of your school or the Ministry?
Appendix C: Information Sheet

RESEARCH TITLE: Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development at Two Fijian Secondary Schools.

My name is Parmeshwar Mohan. I am currently at the Ministry of Education in the Research Unit and a part-time student in the Master of Education at The University of the South Pacific and seek your help in data collection, which forms a substantial part of this research.

The aim of my project is to get the perceptions of teachers on Professional Development.

I request your participation in some of the following ways:

I will be conducting a semi-structured interview that will take about one hour to complete and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. If you agree to be interviewed, I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. For your information, this interview will be recorded using a small voice recording device.

You have the right to decline to take part in this research project. If you have agreed to participate in an interview, you can withdraw at any time until the completion of the interview process. You can also refuse to answer any particular questions at any point of time. You will also have the opportunity to check the transcripts and make corrections. Your identity will be kept anonymous. Neither you nor your school will be identified in the project.

I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the research, you may contact my supervisor Dr. Govinda Lingam by Email govinda.lingam@usp.ac.fj.

Yours sincerely

Parmeshwar MOHAN
Appendix D: Participant’s Consent Form

CONSENT FORM – The Teachers    DATE :

TO: [participant’s name]

FROM: Parmeshwar MOHAN

RE: Research Project

RESEARCH TITLE: Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development at Two Fijian Secondary Schools.

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my school will be used in any public reports. I also understand the interview will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher and that I will be provided with a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for checking before data analysis is started. I am also informed that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _________________________________

Name: _________________________________

Date: _________________________________
Appendix E: Ministry of Education Approval Letter

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, NATIONAL HERITAGE,
CULTURE & ARTS

Quality Education for Change, Peace and Progress

Resident Address: Marela House, 19 Thurston Street, Suva, Fiji. Ph: (679) 3314477
Postal Address: Private Mail Bag, Government Buildings, Suva, Fiji. Fax: (679) 3303511

Our Reference: RA 33/14 Date: 29th July 2014
Mr Parmeshwar MOHAN
Ministry of Education
Fiji.

Re: Official Approval to Conduct Research in Fiji

Dear Mr Mohan

We are pleased to inform you that the approval for the request to conduct research in Fiji has been granted on the topic: “Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development at Two Fijian Secondary Schools.”

The approval is granted from August to November 2014 as specified in your request.

It is also noted that in this research, you and your team will be working closely with the Macuata/Bua and Suva Education Office who would be assisting you with facilitating your research. Please liaise with the relevant personnel and organizations with regards to the logistics and the conduct of your research and be further advised that the Government of Fiji’s legislations, procedures, policies and protocols must be unreservedly adhered to. Since your research includes students and teachers in school, you are to register with the Fiji Teacher Registration Board.

As a condition for the research approval, a copy of the final research report must be submitted to the Ministry of Education (MoE) through this office upon completion, before the commencement of any publication. Only after the MoE Research & Ethics Council has endorsed the report, shall you be allowed to do any publication of the report. The report will be reserved in the MoE Research Library and will be availed for reference by Senior Ministry and Government officials.

Moreover, it is important to note that the Ministry of Education reserves a right to publish the final report or an edited summary of it.

We further wish you success in your research project.

Antonio Ravai (Mr)

for Permanent Secretary for Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts