

Professional Development Motivation As The Strongest Predictor Of Teacher Service Delivery:

Evidence From Rural Secondary Schools In Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Teacher motivation remained central to understanding teacher effectiveness and educational quality, particularly in developing contexts. Rural secondary schools in Uganda face challenges such as limited resources, difficult working conditions, and inconsistent incentives, all of which affect teacher performance. While intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have traditionally been emphasized, evidence from a mixed-methods study in Kisoro District shows that professional development motivation is the strongest predictor of teacher service delivery. Guided by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the study finds that teachers engaged in continuous learning demonstrate higher instructional competence, effective classroom management, lesson preparation, assessment quality, and professional commitment. Quantitative analysis reveals a strong positive correlation between professional development motivation and service delivery, while qualitative interviews indicate that teachers view professional development as a pathway to career advancement, confidence, and adaptation to pedagogical demands. The findings underscore the need to strengthen professional development structures in rural districts to enhance teacher performance and improve learning outcomes.

Keywords: Professional Development, Motivation, Strongest Predictor and Teacher Service Delivery

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Teacher motivation remains a foundational factor in determining the success of educational systems across the world. According to Herzberg (1959), motivated employees, teachers included, exhibit greater effort and commitment to their organizational roles, which in turn enhances overall productivity. In educational settings, teacher motivation has been widely linked to improved instructional quality, learner engagement, and school effectiveness (Najjuma, 2019). In Uganda, however, the discourse on teacher motivation has become more urgent, particularly in rural districts where instructional conditions are often inadequate, professional support structures are weak, and career advancement opportunities are limited. These constraints have contributed to declining teacher morale, inconsistent service delivery, and widening disparities in learning outcomes between urban and rural areas (Government of Uganda, 2019).

Although intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have long been recognized as important factors in shaping teacher behavior (Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, 1966), emerging evidence from Ugandan scholarship suggests that professional development motivation is increasingly influential. Researchers such as Mpaata (2022), Kagoda

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et al. (2020), and Muyombwe (2023) have argued that continuous learning experiences, such as workshops, school-based training, refresher courses, and mentorship, equip teachers with essential skills for responding to evolving curriculum demands, diverse learner needs, and digital pedagogies.

These arguments align with Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964), which posits that individuals are more motivated when they perceive that their effort will lead to improved performance and valued outcomes such as career advancement and professional recognition.

Despite this growing recognition, limited research has examined the comparative predictive power of professional development motivation relative to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. This gap is particularly evident in rural settings where teachers face systemic disadvantages that influence their work experiences. The study on which this article is based was therefore conducted to examine professional development motivation as a predictor of teacher service delivery in rural secondary schools in Kisoro District, Uganda. The findings demonstrate that professional development motivation not only predicts service delivery but also surpasses the predictive power of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This article advances the argument that continuous professional learning has become a central pillar of teacher motivation in Uganda's rural education landscape.

SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

Teacher motivation has been widely studied through various theoretical lenses, with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959, 1966) and Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) forming the core theoretical foundations for understanding teacher performance in

Ugandan education research. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between hygiene factors, such as salary, working conditions, supervision, and school policies, and motivator factors, which include achievement, recognition, advancement, and opportunities for professional growth. According to Herzberg (1959), hygiene factors do not necessarily motivate employees but prevent dissatisfaction, while motivators directly contribute to increased job satisfaction and improved performance. In the context of teaching, this theory suggests that although salary and working conditions may influence teacher presence and stability, the true drivers of excellent instructional practice lie in factors such as professional development, mastery of content, and opportunities to achieve or be recognized (Herzberg, 1966). This aligns with the argument advanced by Namara (2025) in the thesis, which notes that teachers in rural secondary schools often experience low satisfaction when hygiene factors are lacking, but their instructional performance improves when they participate in capacity-building activities that enhance their competence and professional identity. Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) further deepens the understanding of why professional development motivation has become a key predictor of teacher service delivery. Expectancy Theory posits that individuals will exert high effort when they believe that their actions will lead to desirable outcomes. In educational

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settings, teachers who perceive that participation in professional development activities will improve their performance, strengthen their career prospects, or enhance their credibility are more likely to be highly motivated. This cognitive evaluation process makes professional development a powerful motivator in environments where career progression and competence-building are highly valued (Kalyango, 2021). The theory also suggests that when rewards associated with professional development, such as recognition, higher responsibilities, or improved self-efficacy, are clear and attainable, teachers are more likely to deliver high-quality services.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), though not the primary theoretical anchor of the study, also provides a useful complementary perspective. Maslow argued that individuals are motivated in a hierarchical manner, beginning with physiological and safety needs, progressing through belongingness and esteem, and culminating in self-actualization. In the teaching profession, self-actualization corresponds to achieving one's full professional potential, which is often facilitated through continuous training, academic advancement, mentorship, and mastery of pedagogical skills. Researchers such as Kagoda et al. (2020) and Ssenyonga (2019) have emphasized that professional development provides avenues through which teachers meet their esteem and self-actualization needs, thereby linking Maslow's theory with contemporary educational motivation research.

Collectively, these theories converge to explain why professional development motivation can exceed intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in predicting teacher service delivery. While intrinsic motivation, such as passion for teaching, relates to Herzberg's motivators, and extrinsic motivation relates to hygiene factors, the modern educational environment requires teachers to continuously update their skills to remain effective. As the thesis argues, professional development provides both the intrinsic satisfaction of mastery and the extrinsic benefits of career enhancement, situating it at the intersection of both classical motivation theories.

2.2 Conceptual Review

The conceptual review examines the key constructs of the study, professional development motivation and teacher service delivery, as discussed in the thesis, and situates them within existing literature. Professional development motivation refers to the internal drive and commitment teachers have toward improving their pedagogical knowledge, skills, and professional competencies. According to Mpaata (2022), teachers who are motivated to learn continuously tend to adopt modern teaching strategies, integrate new instructional technologies, and align their practices with contemporary curriculum demands. In Uganda, professional development has been emphasized through initiatives such as the Teacher Professional Development Framework by the Ministry of Education and Sports, which encourages competence-based training, peer-learning communities, and reflective practice (Government of Uganda, 2019). The thesis reinforces that professional development motivation is shaped by factors such as availability of workshops, mentorship

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programs, relevance of training to daily classroom challenges, and perceived opportunities for career advancement.

Teacher service delivery, on the other hand, encompasses the quality and effectiveness of teachers' instructional performance. This includes lesson preparation, content mastery, classroom management, assessment practices, time management, learner engagement, and overall commitment to the teaching profession. Literature indicates that high teacher motivation, whether intrinsic, extrinsic, or professional development based, leads to improved service delivery (Juliet et al., 2022; Mugisha, 2023). However, the thesis demonstrates that professional development motivation has the most consistent influence on service delivery because it equips teachers with practical skills that directly impact their classroom performance. For example, teachers who receive training on competency-based assessment are more likely to deliver timely and meaningful feedback, while those trained in modern teaching methods are better able to engage learners and facilitate interactive lessons.

Research also shows that rural contexts shape the relationship between motivation and service delivery. Studies by Tusiime (2020) and Nabaasa (2021) highlight that teachers in rural schools face unique challenges including heavy workloads, limited instructional materials, and isolation from professional networks. Under such conditions, professional development becomes essential for empowering teachers to overcome contextual limitations. The thesis findings align with these studies, showing that teachers who participated in professional development activities displayed enhanced confidence, adaptability, and commitment, even when extrinsic motivators such as salary or working conditions were inadequate.

The conceptual relationship between professional development motivation and teacher service delivery is therefore grounded in both theory and empirical evidence. Professional development increases teachers' competence, strengthens their professional identity, and enhances their willingness to implement effective instructional practices. As the thesis concludes, this makes professional development motivation a stronger and more reliable predictor of service delivery than intrinsic or extrinsic motivation alone.

SECTION 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of professional development motivation and its influence on teacher service delivery in rural secondary schools. The quantitative component allowed for statistical measurement of the relationships between motivation types (intrinsic, extrinsic, and professional development) and teacher performance, while the qualitative component provided deeper insights into teachers' perceptions, experiences, and contextual factors influencing motivation. The design aligns with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) recommendation that mixed-methods approaches are particularly effective

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in educational research where both measurable outcomes and nuanced understanding of human behavior are critical.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The population for this study consisted of all teachers in rural secondary schools in Kisoro District, Uganda, totaling approximately 420 teachers across 18 government-aided and private rural schools. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across school types, gender, and teaching experience. A total of 150 teachers were selected for the quantitative survey, representing roughly 36% of the population, while 15 teachers and 5 school administrators were purposively selected for qualitative interviews to capture rich, contextualized perspectives.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

1. **Questionnaires:** Structured questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data. The instrument measured:

- **Professional development motivation** (frequency of participation in workshops, training, and mentorship, perceived value of professional growth)
- **Intrinsic motivation** (passion for teaching, personal satisfaction, commitment to students)
- **Extrinsic motivation** (salary satisfaction, working conditions, recognition) ▪ **Teacher service delivery** (lesson preparation, classroom management, assessment practices, learner engagement). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

2. **Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted with selected teachers and administrators to explore:

- Teachers' experiences with professional development programs
- Perceived impact of training on classroom practices
- Motivational factors influencing daily teaching practices
- Barriers to effective service delivery in rural contexts

3.4 Validity and Reliability

- **Content validity:** This was ensured through expert review by educational researchers familiar with teacher motivation and rural school challenges in Uganda.
- **Construct validity:** This was supported by aligning questionnaire items with established scales in motivation and teacher performance research (e.g., Mpaata, 2022; Kagoda et al., 2020).
- **Reliability:** This was tested using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.87 for professional development motivation, 0.82 for intrinsic motivation, 0.79 for extrinsic motivation, and 0.90 for teacher service delivery, indicating high internal consistency.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

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Data collection followed a structured process in which permission was first obtained from the District Education Office and individual school heads. Teachers were then briefed about the purpose of the study, and informed consent was obtained. Questionnaires were administered during scheduled staff meetings and collected immediately to ensure high response rates. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted in quiet, private settings within schools, each lasting 40–60 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participant consent.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were entered into SPSS version 26 for analysis. Techniques included descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) to summarize motivational levels and service delivery scores, Pearson correlation to examine the relationships between motivation types and service delivery, and multiple regression analysis to identify the strongest predictor of teacher service delivery. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic content analysis, with coding focused on recurring themes related to professional development experiences, perceived impact on teaching, and contextual challenges. Triangulation with quantitative findings was employed to enhance validity.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality of responses, allowing participants to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and securing permission from school authorities and district education officials.

SECTION 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quantitative Findings

4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed for all key variables: professional development motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and teacher service delivery.

Results are summarized in **Table 4.1**.

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Interpretation |
|-------------------------------------|----------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Professional Development Motivation | 150 | 4.21 | 0.56 | High motivation to engage in PD |
| Intrinsic Motivation | 150 | 3.78 | 0.62 | Moderate to high intrinsic motivation |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|------|------|--------------------------------|
| Extrinsic Motivation | 150 | 3.42 | 0.71 | Moderate extrinsic motivation |
| Teacher Service Delivery | 150 | 4.05 | 0.58 | High level of service delivery |

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Teachers in rural Kisoro District reported high levels of professional development motivation, moderate intrinsic motivation, and moderate extrinsic motivation. Overall service delivery scores were high, suggesting a generally positive instructional performance among respondents.

4.1.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between motivation types and teacher service delivery (Table 4.2).

| Variable | Teacher Service Delivery (r) | Significance (pvalue) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Professional Development Motivation | 0.78 | 0.001 |
| Intrinsic Motivation | 0.63 | 0.001 |
| Extrinsic Motivation | 0.49 | 0.001 |

Source: Primary Data, 2026

Professional development motivation exhibited the strongest positive correlation ($r = 0.78$, $p < 0.01$) with teacher service delivery, followed by intrinsic motivation ($r = 0.63$) and extrinsic motivation ($r = 0.49$). This indicates that teachers who are motivated to participate in professional development activities are more likely to deliver high-quality instructional services.

4.1.3 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which motivation type best predicts teacher service delivery (Table 4.3).

| Predictor Variable | Beta (β) | t-value | Significance (pvalue) |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Professional Development Motivation | 0.56 | 8.74 | 0.001 |
| Intrinsic Motivation | 0.29 | 4.21 | 0.001 |
| Extrinsic Motivation | 0.18 | 2.87 | 0.005 |

Source: Primary Data, 2026

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Professional development motivation emerged as the **strongest predictor** of teacher service delivery, with $\beta = 0.56, p < 0.01$. This confirms that continuous professional learning has a stronger influence on teachers' instructional performance than either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation also contributes positively, while extrinsic motivation has a smaller, though still significant, effect.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

4.2.1 Themes from Teacher Interviews

Professional Growth as a Motivator

Teachers consistently reported that opportunities for professional development, such as workshops, refresher courses, and mentorship, enhanced their confidence and competence. One teacher stated: *"Attending training helps me plan my lessons better and use interactive teaching methods. I feel more capable and recognized as a professional."*

Career Advancement and Recognition

Professional development was linked to career growth and promotion opportunities. Teachers viewed these activities as a pathway to achieving professional goals, which directly influenced their commitment to service delivery.

Adaptation to Modern Pedagogical Demands

Teachers highlighted that training in new teaching methods, ICT integration, and curriculum updates enabled them to meet the diverse learning needs of students: *"The training on competency-based assessment allowed me to give meaningful feedback to my students, which motivates me to teach better."*

Challenges in Rural Contexts

Despite high motivation for professional development, teachers faced barriers such as limited access to training programs, inadequate resources, and high workloads. These challenges occasionally constrained their ability to apply learned skills fully.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate that professional development motivation is a central driver of teacher service delivery in rural secondary schools. This supports Herzberg's (1959, 1966) assertion that motivator factors, such as opportunities for achievement and growth, are more effective in enhancing job performance than hygiene factors. Professional development aligns with motivator factors by providing achievement, recognition, and career advancement opportunities.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) is also confirmed by the findings: teachers exerted greater effort and delivered higher-quality services when they perceived that engagement in professional development would lead to tangible outcomes, including career progression, increased competence, and recognition. Intrinsic

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motivation contributed positively, consistent with the literature emphasizing passion for teaching as important, while extrinsic motivators such as salary and working conditions had a smaller impact, likely due to systemic limitations in rural schools.

Qualitative insights revealed that teachers not only value professional development for skill acquisition but also as a means of professional identity building, self-confidence, and adaptation to modern pedagogical approaches. This reinforces the thesis argument that professional development motivation surpasses intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in predicting service delivery, particularly in rural contexts where other resources and incentives may be limited.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated professional development motivation as a predictor of teacher service delivery in rural secondary schools in Kisoro District, Uganda. The findings provide compelling evidence that professional development motivation is the strongest determinant of teacher performance, surpassing both intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation. Teachers who actively engage in continuous professional learning demonstrate higher levels of instructional competence, effective classroom management, lesson preparation, and assessment quality.

The results align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, highlighting that motivator factors such as achievement, recognition, and professional growth directly enhance job performance. Similarly, Vroom's Expectancy Theory explains why teachers invest more effort when they perceive that professional development leads to career advancement, increased competence, and professional recognition. While intrinsic motivation, such as personal satisfaction and passion for teaching, remains important, extrinsic motivation factors, including salary and working conditions, showed a smaller impact on service delivery, particularly in resource-constrained rural schools.

Qualitative insights reinforced that professional development is not only a tool for skill enhancement but also a mechanism for professional identity, confidence-building, and adaptation to evolving pedagogical demands. In rural contexts, where teachers often face isolation, limited instructional resources, and heavy workloads, professional development emerges as a critical strategy for sustaining motivation and improving educational outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policymakers, school administrators, and education stakeholders:

Strengthen Professional Development Structures

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The Ministry of Education and school administrations should expand access to workshops, refresher courses, mentorship programs, and in-service training, particularly targeting rural teachers.

Professional development programs should be aligned with curriculum updates and modern pedagogical practices to ensure relevance and practical applicability.

Promote Career Advancement Opportunities

Linking professional development activities with promotions, recognition, and career progression will enhance motivation and reinforce the value of continuous learning.

Schools should establish clear pathways for teachers to advance professionally based on demonstrated competence and participation in training.

3. Foster a Culture of Continuous Learning

Encourage peer-learning communities, teacher learning circles, and collaborative professional networks to facilitate ongoing knowledge sharing and support in rural contexts.

Recognize and celebrate teachers who demonstrate commitment to professional growth to enhance intrinsic and professional development motivation.

Address Rural-Specific Challenges

Provide logistical and financial support for rural teachers to attend professional development programs, including transportation, accommodation, and teaching resources.

Implement school-based professional development to reduce barriers related to distance, workload, and isolation.

Future Research Directions

Further studies should explore longitudinal impacts of professional development motivation on teacher retention, student learning outcomes, and school performance in diverse rural contexts.

Research could investigate the interplay between professional development motivation and digital learning tools, particularly as technology integration becomes increasingly important in Ugandan education.

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