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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Translating Teacher Continuous Professional Development (TCPD) into Practice: Primary School's-Level Experiences

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Author's Contributions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how school-level conditions shape the translation of professional development into everyday practice within Tanzania's TCPD in response to the Education and Training Policy (ETP) 2014 revised version of 2023 reform. It begins from the evidence that policy frameworks and professional development activities do not actively influence teaching directly rather it depends on the organisational, relational, and motivational life of schools. Using a quantitative secondary analysis of an uploaded survey workbook containing 725 respondents from six regions namely: Iringa, Njombe, Geita, Singida, Rukwa, and Mtwara, the study analysed participation patterns, understanding of head teacher practices, and multiple motivation profiles to explore how professional learning is enacted at school level. The descriptive findings indicate that weekly engagement in professional development activities is widespread, Communities of Learning (CoL) are the dominant participation modality, and that teachers generally report positive strategic leadership conditions and strong accountability routines and autonomous motivation. Regression results further reveal that school-level implementation factors such as strategic leadership, developmental support, accountability management, and the absence of passive leadership are closely related to motivation outcomes. This paper argues that these relationships should be interpreted as evidence of implementation mediation, schools interpret policy and programme inputs into everyday professional experience. The study contributes to the literature on continuous professional development by showing that the effectiveness of school-based professional development depends not only on programme design but also on the capacity of schools to adapt, support, and routinize professional learning.

Keywords: Teacher continuous professional development; community of learning; passive leadership; motivation outcomes; professional learning

INTRODUCTION

The practices of education reforms move from policy design of workshop-based to school-based classroom practice in a direct line, recently Tanzania has embarked into the Education and Training Policy (ETP) 2014 revised version of 2023 reform, which has also transformed varied teaching and learning practices in schools. Schools interpret, sequence, and rework reform demands through their own organizational

routines and professional cultures (Bellibaş et al 2020; Pedder, 2011). Teacher Continuous Professional Development (TCPD) is not an exception due to the fact that in many systems, the key question is not whether professional development exists, but how it is translated into school routines and regular teacher practice to actualize the objectives of education reforms. Research indicates that the impact of TCPD depends not only on programme content but also the school environment

that makes new learning actionable and sustainable on the regular basis (Kennedy, 2016; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In Tanzania, education reforms institutionalize teacher professional development inside schools rather than occasional workshops through regular, practical, and collaborative learning opportunities (MoEST, 2020; Chachage & Thakrar, 2023).

Policy documents and National Framework for TCPD shift away from episodic external training towards organizing school and cluster levels' routines, communities of learning, digital tools, and practical professional support structures (MoEST, 2020; Todd et al., 2025). The education reforms are significant because school-based professional development is most likely to influence practice when teachers can regularly connect collective learning to immediate instructional problems and shared school priorities (Stoll et al., 2006; Vescio et al., 2008). Evidence from different global contexts indicate that regular participation in professional learning does not guarantee meaningful instructional improvement, because collaboration can become procedural when time, leadership, trust, and follow-up are weak (Vangrieken et al., 2017; Kennedy, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2024). Schools become a mediating institution rather than a center of delivery, teachers come together, shape and reform expectations to become credible professional works in compliance with routines (Priestley et al., 2015; Qian & Walker, 2021).

Education reforms are understood when policy expectations are turned into meaningful dialogue, regular routines, and practical support that teachers consider useful (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Transformation does not mean distortion or failure but the process through which reform inputs are interpreted, organized, and made workable within local contexts. In this sense, the practical representation of TCPD is shaped within local domains (schools) through leadership styles, collaboration, expectations, and feedback processes (Desimone, 2009; Zhang et al., 2022). In the context of Tanzania, TCPD formally repositioned professional learning of the teacher as a continuous and school-based process designed for strengthening collaboration, classroom practice, and linking support across the education system (MoEST, 2020; Chachage & Thakrar, 2023). Education reform implies a broader international transformation from one-off cascade training to professional learning that is sustained, content-focused, collaborative, and closely

connected to teachers' daily work (Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

In low and middle-income countries like Tanzania, school-based professional learning offers practical benefits by reducing the cost and disruption of external training while enabling more regular peer interaction and adaptation to local needs (Chachage & Thakrar, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2024). Within the TCPD programme, communities of learning are the prime supported by workshops, mentoring, coaching, digital platforms, and self-study materials where possible (MoEST, 2020; Todd et al., 2025). Strong emphasis is placed on school capacity, on whether schools can organise participation, protect time, and connect professional learning to everyday classroom practices (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Todd et al., 2025). It also assumes that head teachers act not only as administrators but also as leaders who legitimize activities, coordinate routines, and make follow-up beyond formal sessions (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015; Qian & Walker, 2021). Evidence from professional learning community study show that collaboration becomes meaningful and effective when schools design a shared purpose, collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and supportive system over time (Stoll et al., 2006; DuFour, 2004).

The shift to school-based professional learning increases the importance of how education reforms are interpreted and implemented within schools. Education policies do not work directly in practice, but they are transformed through local decision-making and organizational processes (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Priestley et al., 2015). Transformation here stands for the way school-level TCPD is clear, understandable, legitimate, and implementable in everyday of professional life (Kennedy, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Teachers support a reform when headteachers' leadership is active and collaboratively linked to teachers' practical concerns. On the contrary, schools may weaken a reform if leadership is passive and the activities are disconnected from classroom realities (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

While Tanzanian policy frameworks directly highlight structures, expectations, and delivery strategies, the frameworks do not explain how teachers consider professional learning as meaningful, relevant, or worth sustaining in their daily work (MoEST, 2020; Chachage & Thakrar, 2023; Desimone, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, in practice much literature remains focused on programme design systems or

participation levels, with less focus on how these systems are translated, organised, and established within schools. As a result, the gap persists between reform expectations and its actualisation experience at school level. The move from workshop-based models to school-embedded professional learning necessarily places schools at the centre of implementation. In reform-implementation model, schools are no longer passive, rather they actively shape how professional development is organised, supported, and sustained (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Priestley et al., 2015). Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining how school-level TCPD reform is facilitated in schools. This study was guided by three objectives namely: (i). To describe the school-level participation and leadership patterns visible in the TCPD survey data; (ii). To analyse how implementation dimensions of TCPD inform different motivation outcomes; and (iii). To interpret the findings as evidence of how schools mediate TCPD and everyday professional practice.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research on teacher professional development indicates that reforms in education do not work directly on classroom practice; rather, they are translated and established through social relationships, organisational settings, and local practices. This is significant for school-based professional development, where the school is not only the recipient of policy but also the central site in which professional learning is constructed. Implementation and learning are inseparable processes. TCPD does not simply give knowledge to teachers rather it is transformed into practice through every day school life conditions (Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Kennedy, 2016).

Various professional learning community (PLC) literature provides a useful guide for understanding what effective translation looks like in practice. PLC are organisational cultures comprising shared values, reflective dialogue, collective responsibility, and supportive structures that facilitate continuous professional inquiry (Stoll et al., 2006; DuFour, 2004). Importantly, this view shifts the focus away from programme labels to the lived organisation of teacher learning. Literature further show that collaboration contributes to improved teaching only when it puts attention to instructional issues, grounded in inquiry, and supported by high-quality interaction (Vescio et al., 2008; Vangrieken et al., 2017). When such conditions are absent, collaboration risks becoming superficial

coordination rather than meaningful professional learning. The effectiveness of school-based professional development depends solely on the availability of collaborative structures plus how schools organise, sustain, and give purpose to them.

The significance of school-level mediation indicate that school leaders influence the conditions under which professional learning is translated and sustained. School leaders influence whether time for collaboration is protected and managed or new ideas are supported after training, and whether professional learning becomes integrated into routine practice (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015; Qian & Walker, 2021). In hierarchical structure, this role concern about balancing accountability with collaborative professionalism (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012). Empirical research also show that leadership contributes on teacher commitment indirectly through PLCs and the quality of school relationship (To et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022). Thus, TCPD implementation is not simply a matter of compliance to programme design, but the organisational accomplishment influenced by relationships, leadership, and institutional conditions.

Motivation research gives a strong lens for analysing this organisational process because it captures how reforms are experienced by teachers. Self-determination theory distinguishes between controlled motivation, autonomous motivation, and amotivation, outlining how different environments leads to different qualities of engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In school-based TCPD, teachers' motivation signifies the quality of implementation; where professional learning is understood as supported, relevant, and meaningful, where teachers are more likely to internalise participation. On the contrary, where the professional development is weakly linked to practice or poorly supported, participation may become mere compliance-driven or disengaged. Empirical findings concur with this observation indicating that teachers' motivation is influenced by leadership practices, workplace conditions, and the relevance of professional development (Zhang et al., 2021; Eyal & Roth, 2011). Motivation, therefore, serves as a bridge between school-level experience and reform enactment.

A related body of knowledge insists that professional development is often filtered through teachers' existing professional truths. Teachers bring prior experience, established beliefs, and accumulated judgment about what constitutes meaningful professional activity. As a result, school-based TCPD does not start from an

empty slate but incorporates conditions shaped by collegial trust, status relations, workload, and previous reform experiences. The effectiveness of TCPD, therefore, depends not only on programme development but also on whether schools can generate informed spaces in which teachers consider professional learning relevant and related to their instructional challenges and professional goals. Reform efforts always struggle when teachers perceive it as externally imposed or disconnected from their classroom realities, but they gain momentum when associated with recognised challenges and supported by observable organisational commitment (Zhang et al., 2022;).

Time and relational factors further influence the interpretation of professional development into practice. Sustained professional learning needs regular opportunities for reflection, interaction, and ongoing practice rather than one-off exposure. This temporal dimension depends on organisational protection where time must be planned, follow-up maintained, and expectations clarified despite competing demands. At the same time, professional learning is inherently relational. Teachers are more likely to explore, experiment, disclose challenges, and participate in inquiry when working in conditions featured by respect, trust, and recognition (Stoll et al., 2006; Vangrieken et al., 2017).

Another key tension in the research concerns striking balance between collective norms and individual agency. While PLCs insists on shared responsibility and shared practice, effective professional learning also needs enough space for teachers to provide judgement and contextual adaptations. Little structure can weaken consistency, while extreme control can weaken ownership and initiative. Basing on ecological view, teacher agency arises within conditions that facilitate or limit professional discretion and problem-solving (Priestley et al., 2015). These dynamics are particular marked in low-resource settings, where materials can limit the interpretation of ideas into practice. In such contexts, collaborative professional learning can support adaptation by facilitating teachers to share strategies and establish solutions which are contextually relevant. However, this can happen when schools prioritise practical problem-solving over procedural compliance. School-based TCPD is therefore most effective for local adaptation rather than a means for reproducing external expectations.

Available evidence in Tanzania reinforces these

broader insights in which national framework has shifted toward adapting continuous school-based professional development through which Communities of Learning (CoL) act as a core delivery mechanism (MoEST, 2020; Chachage & Thakrar, 2023). Various studies on TCPD implementation indicate expanding engagement alongside variation in school-level factors, outlining the significance of collegiality, leadership, relevance, and teacher agency in influencing engagement (Todd et al., 2025). School-based professional development succeeds when it is integrated in relational, credible, and well-supported organisational settings, and weakens when participation becomes procedural or disconnected from teachers' professional concerns (Desimone, 2009; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). The present study builds on this idea by using TCPD survey data to examine how school-level experiences of leadership, motivation, and professional learning culture influence the translation of reform into practice.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by an implementation–mediation perspective informed by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). The main idea of SDT is that the quality of motivation depends on the degree to which environment support three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. While the theory focuses on motivation, this study combines theory with implementation–mediation perspective to examine how school environments influence teachers' experience of reform. The theory provides clear clarifications of school-level processes that matter for teachers lived experience of reform. Environments that support competence, autonomy, and relatedness are more likely to develop autonomous motivation, whereas environments revealed by pressure without support or by weak follow-through are more likely to develop controlled motivation or amotivation.

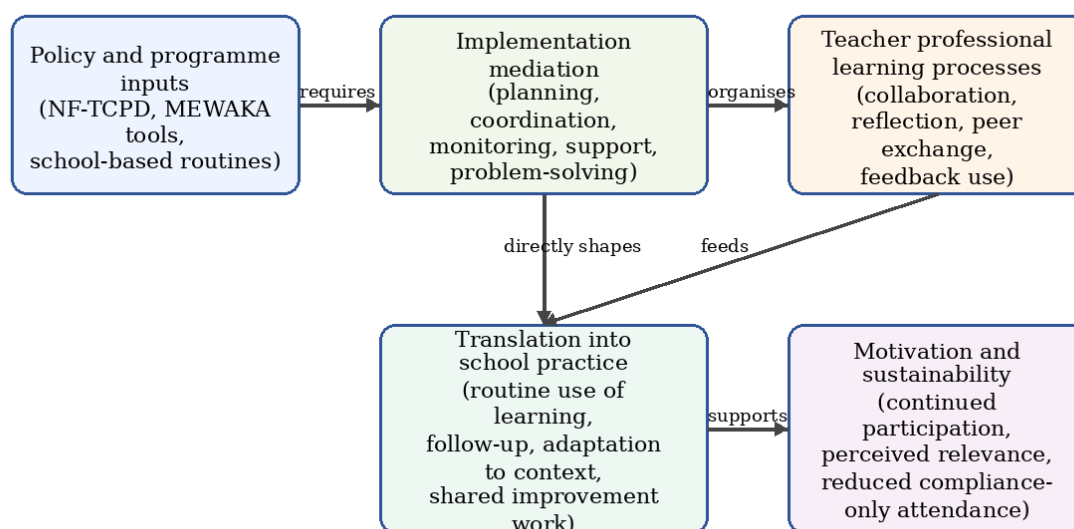
The implementation-mediating perspective considers schools active places of policy implementation rather than passive delivery centres. Reform inputs such as policy guidance, TCPD tools, and programme intentions shape practice indirectly through school-level processes including coordination, planning, support, monitoring, and problem-solving. These mediating processes determine whether professional development is interpreted into effective and meaningful classroom practices or remains procedural.

Within this process, head teacher practices are the central focus because they determine how reforms are translated, supported, and sustained in everyday school-routines.

Further, SDT explains why these processes are important: school environments that support competence, autonomy, and relatedness are more likely to develop autonomous motivation, while those characterised by pressure or weak follow-through tend to develop controlled motivation or amotivation. The

motivation referred here acts as an interpretive indicator of quality. This combined framework is appropriate and significant because it connects policy, school-level enactment, and teacher experience something that purely structural implementation models or individual-focused motivation theories cannot fully capture (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). The conceptual framework adapted for this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework developed for the present study (Source: 2026)



METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design using secondary analysis of TCPD survey workbook. The data set consisted 725 responses and 59 variables. The survey included demographic information, perceptions of head teacher practices, participation in TCPD activities, leadership and developmental support items, and multiple measures of teacher motivation. A cross-sectional design was used to examine patterns of association among professional learning conditions, leadership practices, and motivation within an ongoing implementation context rather than to establish causal relationships. The use of secondary data provided access to a large, naturally occurring data set capturing school-level experiences of reform. The data set had already been de-identified at respondent level; no personal names were used in the analysis, and although school names were present in the raw data, they are not reported in this paper. The data-set

signifies a substantial multi-school sample drawn from six regions of Tanzania; these are Njombe, Iringa, Geita, Singida, Rukwa, and Mtwara. The regions were purposively selected to reflect diverse geographical settings and varying levels of academic performance. The regions, as indicated by 2025 National Examinations Council of Tanzania PSLE results, have examination results that range from relatively high-performing regions (Iringa and Njombe) to lower-performing ones (Rukwa and Mtwara), whereas, Geita and Singida represent moderate performance. This variation enables a comprehensive analysis of how contextual conditions such as teacher participation in TCPD activities, and school leadership practices influence the effective implementation of school-based professional development. However, because regional and district data were captured as open-text entries with inconsistencies, the data set is not treated as nationally representative but rather an analytically useful multi-school sample for examining implementation processes

and relationships.

Data Analysis Procedures

The findings were analysed through three stages. First, descriptive statistics was done to summarize respondents' characteristics, participation patterns, and the central tendency of key variables. Second, Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships among leadership aspects, overall professional learning culture, and motivation outcomes. Third, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models were estimated to examine whether leadership practices and professional learning culture predicted controlled motivation, autonomous motivation, and amotivation while controlling for demographic variables. To support this analysis, seven multi-item scales were developed from Likert-type survey items: strategic PLC leadership, passive leadership, autonomous motivation, accountability management, developmental support, controlled motivation, and amotivation. Strategic PLC leadership considered vision, collaboration, encouragement of ideas, high expectations, integrity, and support for professional growth. Accountability management captured procedural enforcement, recognition, rewards, target focus, participation monitoring, and rules. Passive leadership reflected avoidance, neglect of feedback, low availability, weak follow-up, and limited interest in outcomes. Developmental support included trust, control of resources, autonomy in teaching methods, stretch opportunities, recognition, reasonable risk-taking, career conversation, and improvement-focused feedback.

Motivation scales were designed from SDT. Autonomous motivation captured meaning, enjoyment, value, and alignment with professional goals; obligation, controlled motivation reflected pressure, and external expectations; and amotivation captured weak perceived usefulness and disconnection from programme goals. Internal consistency for all scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and results shown acceptable to very strong reliability. An overall professional learning culture composite was created by averaging strategic leadership, developmental support, accountability management, and the reverse of passive leadership.

The participant profiles support this analytical focus by showing a relatively experienced group of education professionals actively engaged in TCPD. As per 725 respondents, 51.6 percent were aged 30-40 years and 41.7 percent were aged 40 years or above, with 61.8

percent male and 38.2 percent female participants. In terms of professional experience, 41.1 percent reported 15 years or more in service and 29.2 percent between 10 and 15 years. The sample comprised 42.2 percent classroom teachers, 36.8 percent head teachers, 13.7 percent academic teachers, and 7.3 percent deputy head teachers, capturing perspectives from both practitioners and school leaders who are central to implementation processes. Notably, 91.9 percent of the respondents reported participating in TCPD once per week, indicating active implementation environment and strengthening its value for understanding how the programme was experienced in everyday school practices. Table 1 below give the summary of respondents' demographic information.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Particulars	n	%
Age 20–30 years	49	6.8
Age 30–40 years	374	51.6
Age 40+ years	302	41.7
Male	448	61.8
Female	277	38.2
10–15 years' experience	212	29.2
15+ years' experience	298	41.1
Classroom teacher	306	42.2
Head teacher	267	36.8
Deputy head teacher	53	7.3
Academic teacher	99	13.7

TCPD participation patterns further confirm the school-based character of the programme. Communities of Learning (CoL) were the most widely reported activity (70.1%), followed by peer facilitation (35.9%), TCPD Learning Management System (22.3%), and district training workshops (16.1%). Because respondents could tick more than one activity, these categories are not mutually exclusive. The patterns, nevertheless, indicated that collaborative school-based learning is the dominant modality in this sample.

Table 2. TCPD participation patterns

Participation pattern	n	%
Communities of Learning (CoL)	508	70.1
Peer facilitation	260	35.9
TCPD LMS (online platform)	162	22.3
District training workshops	117	16.1
Self-learning using modules	0	0.0

FINDINGS

The descriptive results indicate that TCPD is a highly active professional learning environment in this sample.

Weekly participation was reported by 91.9 percent of respondents, and CoL were the most common activity. This suggests that the survey involved schools where TCPD was already integrated in regular routine practices. At the same time, descriptive findings also indicates that participation should not be equated with identical motivational quality across schools. Teachers were generally positive about head teachers' practices. Strategic Professional Learning Community (PLC) leadership recorded a mean of 4.09 (SD = 0.83), accountability management 3.98 (SD = 0.82), and developmental support 3.85 (SD = 0.85). Passive leadership was recorded lower at 2.26 (SD = 1.27), which is encouraging because these items capture neglectful and reactive implementation behaviour. The pattern proposes that many respondents perceived schools as combining purpose, structure, and support for TCPD.

The motivation profile is similarly revealing. Autonomous motivation was high (M = 4.24, SD = 0.73), indicating that many teachers perceived TCPD

professionally meaningful. Controlled motivation was moderate (M = 3.56, SD = 0.86), showing that participation is also influenced by organisational expectations. Amotivation was lower (M = 2.44, SD = 1.28) but not negligible because even in active school-based professional learning environments, some teachers remain weakly linked to programme goals. At item level, teachers most strongly endorsed statements linked TCPD to growth as a teacher, professional value, student learning, and teaching effectiveness. Leadership-related items with the highest support included communicating a clear vision, supporting professional growth, encouraging new ideas, and monitoring participation. By contrast, the least endorsed items were those explaining avoidance of problems, weak follow-up, and low interest in TCPD outcomes. This internal pattern strengthens confidence that respondents were aware of meaningful dimensions of implementation rather than providing uniformly positive answers.

Table 3. Reliability and descriptive statistics for the main scales

Scale	Items	α	Mean	SD
Strategic PLC leadership	8	0.933	4.09	0.83
Accountability management	6	0.875	3.98	0.82
Passive leadership	6	0.926	2.26	1.27
Developmental support	8	0.905	3.85	0.85
Autonomous motivation	10	0.948	4.24	0.73
Controlled motivation	6	0.784	3.56	0.86
Amotivation	4	0.928	2.44	1.28

Correlational results point out the same direction where strategic leadership, developmental support and accountability management; were all positively related to autonomous motivation, while passive leadership was strongly and positively linked with amotivation. The overall professional learning culture composite

correlated positively with autonomous motivation and negatively with amotivation. These patterns fit the theoretical expectation that school environments help to influence the quality of participation in professional learning.

Table 4. Correlations among leadership, culture, and motivation scales

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Strategic PLC leadership	1.00	0.80	0.03	0.64	0.58	0.24	-0.09	0.81
2. Accountability management	0.80	1.00	0.11	0.68	0.56	0.33	-0.04	0.79
3. Passive leadership	0.03	0.11	1.00	0.17	-0.04	0.29	0.62	-0.42
4. Developmental support	0.64	0.68	0.17	1.00	0.52	0.28	0.01	0.70
5. Autonomous motivation	0.58	0.56	-0.04	0.52	1.00	0.31	-0.10	0.59
6. Controlled motivation	0.24	0.33	0.29	0.28	0.31	1.00	0.45	0.10
7. Amotivation	-0.09	-0.04	0.62	0.01	-0.10	0.45	1.00	-0.36
8. Overall PLC culture	0.81	0.79	-0.42	0.70	0.59	0.10	-0.36	1.00

The regression models further added a nuance. The overall professional learning culture was a strong positive predictor of autonomous motivation and a strong negative predictor of amotivation, even after demographic controls were added. It was also a smaller but statistically significant positive predictor of controlled motivation. This suggests that schools with stronger professional learning cultures are more likely to develop internalised engagement and; may also communicate stronger expectations around participation.

Table 5. Overall professional learning culture as a predictor of motivation outcomes (with controls)

Outcome	B for PLC culture	SE	p	R ²
Autonomous motivation	0.7	0.036	<.001	0.352
Controlled motivation	0.157	0.052	0.003	0.026

Table 6. Specific leadership dimensions predicting motivation outcomes

Outcome	R ²	Strategic leadership	Accountability	Developmental support	Passive leadership
Autonomous motivation	0.402	0.246 (<.001)	0.169 (<.001)	0.200 (<.001)	-0.063 (<.001)
Controlled motivation	0.212	-0.003 (0.957)	0.207 (0.001)	0.120 (0.013)	0.204 (<.001)
Amotivation	0.407	-0.101 (0.191)	-0.059 (0.470)	-0.040 (0.524)	0.628 (<.001)

Overall, the results suggest that TCPD is practiced in many schools as both professionally valuable and institutionally desirable. The limitation for implementation is, therefore, not merely to increase participation but to ensure that the structures surrounding participation continue to support ownership, internalisation, and practice-relevant learning.

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The results strongly support the argument that TCPD is interpreted into practice more through school-level mediation than through policy design alone. Although national policies provide the formal design of school-based continuous professional development, the findings suggests that teachers' day-to-day motivation is directly influenced by the support, accountability practices, leadership and follow-through experienced within schools. This aligns with implementation scholarship which states that reforms are not established automatically, but are translated and

Outcome	B for PLC culture	SE	p	R ²
Amotivation	-0.753	0.073	<.001	0.149

When the specific leadership dimensions were entered simultaneously, accountability management, strategic leadership, and developmental support all contributed positively to autonomous motivation, while passive leadership had a negative contribution. For controlled motivation, developmental support, accountability management, and passive leadership remained positive predictors, whereas strategic leadership was not significant. For amotivation, passive leadership was by far the dominant predictor. This evidence shows that neglectful implementation is particularly corrosive to teacher engagement, while strategic and developmental support help to shift motivation towards more internalized forms.

reconstructed within organisational settings (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). In this sense, TCPD appears a less centrally delivered programme but rather a more reform programme whose quality depends on how schools locally interpret policy into meaningful professional practice. These findings, therefore, strengthen broader perspectives on educational change that emphasise mediation, practice, and local sense-making rather than linear policy transfer (Louws et al., 2025).

One of the types of evidence found deals with the widespread participation in weekly professional learning activities and the dominance of CoL as the main implementation modality. This suggests that TCPD has become routine in many schools. The routine nature is very important because sustained and regular professional practice is widely known as more effective than isolated workshops or training events (Sims et al., 2021). In this regard, the findings are consistent with international evidence indicating that job-embedded, collaborative, and continuous professional development tend to have stronger effects on teacher

learning and instructional change than one external training. However, it has been observed that routine participation alone does not reflect stronger motivation. This is different from simplistic assumptions that frequency automatically equals effectiveness. Instead, routine matters a lot when accompanied by strategic direction, supportive leadership, and meaningful participation. This supports Kennedy's (2016) argument that the form of professional development matters less than the processes and purposes through which it is implemented.

Strategic leadership emerged as the strongest positive predictor of autonomous motivation. Teachers who perceived head teachers encouraging innovation, communicating clear vision, and linking TCPD to school improvement were more likely to interpret participation as meaningful and worthwhile. This finding is closely associated with STD, which proposes that individuals internalise external initiatives more fully when they understand their value and feel psychologically supported (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The finding also mirrors findings by Eyal and Roth (2011), who found that autonomy-supportive school leadership reinforces teachers' internal motivation. Similarly, Whitworth and Chiu (2015) revealed that principals play an important contribution in influencing whether professional development is practiced as compliance or genuine growth. This study expands these insights by indicating that in the Tanzanian context, strategic leadership emerge to function as a translation strategy through which reform expectations become professional purpose. Rather than simply administering TCPD, head teachers define what it means within schools. The findings also concur with professional learning community (PLC) literature. PLC scholars have long argued that collaboration is most effective when anchored in collective goals, collective responsibility, reflective dialogue, and improvement-oriented norms rather than mere attendance at meetings (Hudson, 2024; de Jong et al., 2024). The current findings support this distinction. Communities of learning were common across all schools, yet motivation remains varied substantially depending on leadership quality. This suggests that collaborative structures by themselves are insufficient; their effectiveness depends on whether leaders build professional trust, coherence, and seriousness of purpose. This finding is also similar to To et al. (2023), who indicate that collaborative teacher learning is promoted when school leaders actively align structures with developmental culture. It also helps

explain why some schools appear active on paper while developing weaker motivational outcomes in practice. Developmental support created another major explanatory factor. Teachers with recognition, experienced trust, opportunities to exercise judgement, constructive feedback, and encouragement to improve were significantly more likely to report autonomous motivation. This strongly supported by Ryan and Deci's (2020) who claim that competence support, relatedness, and autonomy are key conditions for internalised motivation. It also concurs with Zhang et al. (2022), who found that supportive school environment facilitates teachers' willingness to participate in innovation and professional learning. Basing on ecological perspective, this idea aligns with Priestley et al. (2015), who stated that teacher agency depends not only on personal disposition but also on the cultural, material, and relational resources available in surroundings. This study therefore suggests that TCPD becomes effective and meaningful when schools create enabling environments. Participation is transformed from programme compliance into professional growth when teachers feel trusted, respected, and helped to improve.

At the same time, the findings exposed a more complex role for accountability management. Accountability was positively related with both autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. This dual finding is theoretically significant. Accountability can protect participation, ensure continuity, and signal seriousness. On the other hand, it can develop pressure, obligation, or externally controlled participation when experienced mainly as enforcement. This is consistent with Hairon and Dimmock (2012), who stated that accountability and professionalism always coexist in tension rather than in opposition. It also supports Zhang et al. (2021), who found that structured expectations can both motivate and constrain teacher participation depending on implementation environment. These findings do not portray accountability as inherently positive or negative, rather accountability is seen as productive when combined with developmental relationships and clear purpose, but counterproductive when detached from support. This nuanced interpretation is, specifically, relevant in public systems where some degree of monitoring is unavoidable.

Perhaps the most prominent negative finding concerns passive leadership. Where teachers perceive school leaders as reactive, inattentive to feedback, unavailable, or delaying in addressing problems,

amotivation raises sharply. This is most significant because it indicates that failure in implementation may take place not only through open resistance, but also through omission, drift, and weak follow-through. Such findings concur with Whitworth and Chiu (2015), who noted that absence of leadership weakens the impact of instructional reform. Also, Qian et al. (2021), emphasize the importance of visible instructional leadership for sustaining school improvement. The present findings also deepen Kennedy's study (2016) that brings a critique about superficial reform implementation by indicating that inactivity can quietly hollow out; otherwise promising initiatives. In school-based TCPD, reforms depend on regular scheduling, encouraging participation, revisiting goals, and responding to challenges. When those maintenance processes weaken, motivation declines and the reform risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

Another significant contribution of these findings is the coexistence of high autonomous motivation with moderate controlled motivation. This implies that the interpretation of TCPD is always hybrid rather than pure. Teachers may value the programme while also responding to school expectations. Such integration is unsurprising in national education systems, where professional aspiration and administrative obligation always coexist. Ryan and Deci (2020) recognise that motivation exists along a continuum rather than in fixed categories, and the findings in this study are illustrative. Controlled motivation does not necessarily indicate failure if accompanied by internal value and commitment. However, long-term sustainability is more likely to depend on schools promoting autonomous rather than purely controlled forms of participation. This finding is similar to Eyal and Roth (2011), who warn that excessive control can negatively affect deep professional commitment even when participation remains high.

These findings also have major implications for monitoring and evaluation. They propose that implementation quality should not be evaluated only by attendance records, activity counts, or formal compliance. Such indicators may indicate whether schools are doing TCPD, but not whether teachers implement it as credible, relevant, and worth transferring into classroom. This observation concurs with Desimone's (2009) influential framework, which argues that effective professional development must be judged by active learning, content relevance, coherence, and sustained duration rather than

participation alone. The current findings suggests that more educationally meaningful monitoring would consider together participation indicators with measures of feedback quality, leadership support, trust, teacher ownership, and follow-up. This is also increasingly supported in recent international TCPD research, which emphasizes implementation environment and professional culture as predictors of impact (Cordingley et al., 2023). The study has wider relevance beyond Tanzania because many systems are moving towards school-based or cluster-based professional development due to both pedagogical concerns and financial constraints. The findings suggest that decentralizing professional development increases rather than reduces the significance of local leadership capacity. This supports Nguyen et al. (2024), who note that decentralize teacher development systems often struggle when local leaders are not prepared to facilitate. It also concurs with Todd et al. (2025), who indicate that school-based reform sustainability depends most on leadership continuity and internal ownership. The broader lesson here is that school-based TCPD should not be seen as a low-cost substitute for external training unless equal attention and focus is given to collaborative routines, leadership development, and implementation support.

Methodologically, these findings contribute to the implementation of research by indicating that motivation data can lead to policy implementation. Teachers' motivational profiles are not merely psychological outcomes, but indicators of how reforms are being institutionally and relationally practiced inside schools. While surveys cannot substitute classroom observation or qualitative case studies, they can indicate large-scale patterns of implementation that would otherwise remain hidden. This supports more recent mixed-method arguments in policy research that combines perceptual and structural data that offers powerful insight into reform processes (Bryk et al., 2023). Motivation, in this sense, is both an outcome and a window into implementation quality. Overall, the findings show that TCPD is effectively translated into practice where schools combine clear strategic direction, constructive accountability, developmental support, consistent follow-through, and collaborative routines. Where these conditions weaken, participation may continue administratively but lose professional depth. This study, therefore, strengthens a broader theoretical conclusion that educational reforms succeed not only through sound policy design, but also through institutions

mediating them. Policies may establish structures, but schools design the lived experiences through which teachers either internalize or merely comply with the policy reforms. In the case of TCPD, head teachers and school cultures appear central to the translation process.

POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

For school leadership development, the findings of this study suggest that preparation programmes for head teachers have to shift beyond general administrative competence and address the leadership of professional learning explicitly. Head teachers need practical tools for organising collaborative routines, giving developmental feedback, communicating purpose, recognizing teacher effort, and responding to implementation challenges without allowing TCPD to become unbeneficial. These competencies should be considered keys to school improvement, not optional soft skills.

For district and ministry actors, the findings signify that support for school-based professional development should consider ongoing accompaniment rather than one-way policy communication. District Educational Officers can strengthen reform quality by facilitating schools to resolve implementation challenges, modifying ways to use communities of learning effectively, and encouraging monitoring that captures both activity and professional meaning. External support is, therefore, most significant when it reinforces school's internal capacity to sustain learning.

For programme design, the findings propose that teachers are likely to participate when professional development is considered relevant, collegial, and linked to their daily routines. This means that TCPD materials and routines should continue to prioritize opportunities for peer learning, practical problems of teaching, and space for contextual adaptation. A school-based system gains legitimacy when teachers can recognise their own work within it rather than experiencing it as a distant policy language.

For research and evaluation, these findings point out the need for richer implementation indicators. Alongside participation rates, evaluation frameworks should evaluate teacher perceptions of developmental feedback, leadership support, follow-up, recognition, and ownership. Such indicators would give a more realistic picture of reform quality and would help to differentiate between superficial adoption and meaningful professional learning.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Several limitations should be kept in view when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the analysis is focused on self-report data collected at a single point in time. This means the models identify associations rather than causal relationships, and the findings depend on how respondents perceived their school conditions. Second, the data set, large as it is, is not a nationally representative sample and contains variation in text-based location entries that hinder stronger geographic claims. Third, the survey does not include direct measures of student outcomes, instructional practice, or longitudinal change. These limitations give room to valuable guidance for future research. Mixed-method studies could follow TCPD activities in selected schools over time to observe more directly how professional learning is organised and how teachers use it in classrooms. Qualitative work could explore how head teachers interpret their role in school-based TCPD and how teachers negotiate accountability and agency within the reform. Longitudinal studies could also test whether stronger autonomous motivation predicts deeper professional learning, sustained participation, and stronger instructional adaptation over time.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined how school-based professional development is integrated in schools through school-level experiences. Using survey data from 725 respondents, the study indicates that school-based participation is widespread, but implementation differs in terms of leadership, support, and follow-through. Accountability management, strategic leadership, and developmental support are related with stronger autonomous motivation, while passive leadership is strongly associated with amotivation. The findings conclude that TCPD works through school-level mediation. Policy frameworks and programme tools matter, but their practical influence depends on how schools organise them into meaningful professional routines. Where schools give purpose, support, structure, and responsiveness, professional development is more likely to be translated into sustained professional practice. On the contrary, the implementation risks becoming procedural and fragile where there are no purpose, support, structure, and responsiveness. Strengthening TCPD reform agenda requires strengthening the school as a mediating institution in Tanzanian schools. Head teachers,

feedback systems, collaborative routines, and supportive implementation cultures should not be considered peripheral to TCPD; they are part of how the reform reaches the practice.

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