

# EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON TEACHER RETENTION IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE UPPER WEST REGION

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## Abstract

This study examines the influence of professional development (PD) on teacher retention in Senior High Schools (SHSs) in Ghana's Upper West Region. Teacher attrition remains a critical challenge in Ghana's educational sector, often undermining instructional quality and school continuity. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 300 SHS teachers through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicate that a range of PD programs such as workshops, curriculum training, and mentoring are available, though participation is uneven, particularly between urban and rural schools. Teachers largely perceive PD as relevant and beneficial to their instructional practice and professional growth. Importantly, a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between the frequency of PD participation and teachers' intention to remain in the profession. The study concludes that sustained and relevant professional development contributes meaningfully to teacher retention. It recommends policy reforms aimed at expanding equitable access to PD, institutionalizing structured and needs-driven training programs, and recognizing PD participation as a critical component of teacher support and retention strategies.

**Keywords:** professional development, teacher retention, Senior High Schools, Ghana, Upper West Region, teacher support, education policy

## Background to the Study

Teacher retention is a critical determinant of educational quality, particularly in resource-constrained regions. Across the globe, and particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, high attrition rates among teachers pose serious threats to the stability and effectiveness of educational systems (Ingersoll & Strong, 2021). In Ghana, the situation is exacerbated by disparities between urban and rural postings, with rural regions like the Upper West struggling to attract and retain qualified Senior High School (SHS) teachers (Acheampong et al., 2020). Among the various interventions proposed to address this issue, professional development stands out as a strategic and sustainable

approach. Professional development refers to the formal and informal learning experiences that enhance teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional growth. It has been consistently linked with improved teacher motivation, satisfaction, and retention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; OECD, 2019). Teachers who engage in regular and meaningful professional development are more likely to stay in the profession, feel supported, and contribute to school improvement (Torres, 2018; Kraft et al., 2020). In the Upper West Region, however, there is limited empirical data on how professional development programs are structured and how they influence teacher retention. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many teachers do not have regular access to capacity-building opportunities and often perceive available training programs as irrelevant or misaligned with their classroom realities (Dzanku & Arhin, 2021). This study, therefore, seeks to critically examine how professional development impacts the retention of SHS teachers in this under-researched region.

Education is universally recognized as a cornerstone for national development, and the role of teachers in achieving quality education cannot be overstated. Teachers are central to the teaching and learning process, and their presence, competence, and commitment directly influence student outcomes. However, the ability of schools and educational systems to retain qualified and experienced teachers has become a global concern. In both developed and developing countries, issues of teacher attrition, low morale, and workforce instability are increasingly undermining the quality of education (Ingersoll & Strong, 2021). In the context of Ghana, teacher attrition remains a persistent problem, particularly in rural and underserved regions such as the Upper West Region. Many Senior High Schools (SHSs) in this region are confronted with frequent staff turnover, resulting in inconsistent instructional delivery, low teacher-student ratios, and diminished academic performance. The situation is further aggravated by limited access to teaching and learning resources, inadequate infrastructure, and harsh living conditions, which discourage teachers from remaining in their posts for long periods (Acheampong et al., 2020; Boadu et al., 2019). One of the critical yet often overlooked factors influencing teacher retention is professional development. Professional development encompasses structured training, workshops, mentoring, in-service education, and collaborative learning opportunities aimed at enhancing teachers' pedagogical skills, subject knowledge, and overall professional competence (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It plays a vital role not only in improving teacher effectiveness but also in reinforcing their sense of professional identity, motivation, and job satisfaction. When teachers feel that their professional growth is supported, they are more likely to remain in the profession and invest in their schools and students over the long term (Kraft & Papay, 2018; Torres, 2018). Globally, education systems that prioritize continuous professional learning are more successful in retaining teachers, particularly in challenging contexts. According to the OECD (2019), countries that implement targeted, needs-based, and school-embedded professional development programs have lower rates of teacher turnover and higher levels of teacher engagement. Conversely, when teachers are denied opportunities for professional advancement, they may feel stagnant, undervalued, and disconnected from institutional goals, leading to burnout and exit from the profession.

In Ghana, various policies such as the National Teacher Policy (MoE, 2020) and reforms in teacher education have acknowledged the importance of professional development. Nonetheless, implementation remains uneven across regions. Rural areas like the Upper West Region are often sidelined due to logistical constraints, limited funding, and weak administrative support. Many

teachers in these areas report that available professional development programs are sporadic, generic, and disconnected from their immediate classroom challenges (Dzanku & Arhin, 2021). As a result, the potential of professional development to serve as a retention strategy is not fully realized. Moreover, most existing studies on teacher retention in Ghana focus on extrinsic factors such as salary, accommodation, and incentives, with less attention paid to intrinsic and developmental aspects like professional growth and career progression. There is a pressing need to examine how professional development contributes to teacher retention from the perspective of teachers themselves, especially within the unique socio-economic and educational landscape of the Upper West Region.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by exploring the relationship between professional development and teacher retention in Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region. The findings will provide insights into how professional development initiatives can be better designed and implemented to retain qualified teachers, improve job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance the quality of education in the region.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Ghana's Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service have made several efforts to improve teacher quality and retention, including the introduction of in-service training and the National Teacher Policy (MoE, 2020). However, rural areas like the Upper West Region continue to experience high teacher turnover rates, which disrupts instructional continuity and undermines student outcomes (Boadu et al., 2019). While much attention has been paid to salary, housing, and incentives, the role of professional development in enhancing retention has not been adequately studied in these settings. Studies in other countries suggest that professional development can serve as a powerful retention tool when it is sustained, collaborative, and relevant to teachers' needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kraft & Papay, 2018). Unfortunately, in the Upper West Region, many SHS teachers report limited access to such opportunities, raising concerns about whether lack of professional growth contributes to attrition.

Understanding the link between professional development and teacher retention is crucial for policy reform and school improvement. Without such insight, educational authorities risk continuing ineffective interventions that fail to address the core needs of teachers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of professional development on the retention of teachers in Senior High Schools within the Upper West Region of Ghana. It aims to investigate the types of professional development programs available, how often they are accessed, teachers' perceptions of these programs, and the extent to which professional development contributes to their decisions to remain in the profession.

### **Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the types of professional development programs available to Senior High School teachers in the Upper West Region.
2. To examine the frequency and accessibility of these professional development opportunities.
3. To assess the perceived impact of professional development on job satisfaction and motivation among SHS teachers.
4. To investigate the relationship between professional development and teacher retention in Senior High Schools.

## **Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What types of professional development programs are available to SHS teachers in the Upper West Region?
2. How frequently do teachers in Senior High Schools access professional development opportunities?
3. What are teachers' perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of these professional development programs?
4. What is the relationship between professional development and the retention of SHS teachers in the Upper West Region?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Professional Development**

Professional development refers to the formal and informal learning activities that teachers engage in to enhance their instructional practices, pedagogical knowledge, and overall professional capacity (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). These activities may include workshops, in-service training, seminars, conferences, mentoring, peer collaboration, and ongoing academic courses. The goal of professional development is to improve teacher quality, increase job satisfaction, and ultimately lead to improved student learning outcomes. There are two broad categories of professional development: formal (e.g., structured training by educational institutions or education directorates) and informal (e.g., collaborative peer learning or self-directed study). Effective professional development is characterized by sustained engagement, relevance to teachers' instructional contexts, collaborative participation, and alignment with school goals (OECD, 2019). Professional development refers to structured and unstructured learning opportunities designed to improve teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional competence throughout their careers. It encompasses a wide array of activities including workshops, in-service training, peer collaboration, coaching and mentoring, online courses, subject-based seminars, curriculum review sessions, and educational conferences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In the context of secondary education, professional development serves three key purposes: Enhancing instructional practices through the

acquisition of pedagogical and content knowledge. Improving student outcomes by equipping teachers with innovative teaching strategies. Promoting career progression and teacher morale, thereby improving retention.

The design and implementation of professional development programs must reflect teachers' real classroom experiences, subject needs, and instructional challenges. According to the OECD (2019), effective professional development is: Sustained over time (not one-off training); Collaborative, allowing for peer-to-peer learning; Contextualized, relating directly to teachers' work environments; Evaluative, allowing for reflection and feedback. In Ghana, professional development is typically delivered through national and district-level in-service training programs, often mandated by the Ghana Education Service (GES). However, access, content quality, and teacher engagement vary significantly, especially between urban and rural settings (Dzanku & Arhin, 2021).

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention refers to the ability of an education system or school to keep its teaching staff for extended periods. It involves reducing voluntary attrition (teachers choosing to leave) and increasing stability in the teaching workforce. Factors influencing retention include salary, working conditions, administrative support, career progression, and opportunities for professional development (Ingersoll & Strong, 2021). Teacher retention refers to the capacity of educational institutions to keep teachers in active service over time. It includes: Short-term retention (teachers staying within a particular school or district), and Long-term retention (teachers remaining in the profession until retirement or promotion).

High teacher retention leads to continuity in instructional delivery, reduced recruitment costs, improved student performance, and a stable school culture. Conversely, high attrition rates disrupt the academic environment, reduce institutional memory, and impair the mentoring of younger teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2021). Factors influencing teacher retention are often classified into: Extrinsic factors: salary, accommodation, workload, teaching materials, and working conditions. Intrinsic factors: job satisfaction, professional autonomy, recognition, and opportunities for growth. In the Ghanaian context, rural teachers often report higher dissatisfaction due to poor infrastructure, professional isolation, and limited development opportunities (Acheampong et al., 2020). These conditions contribute to frequent requests for transfer or outright exit from the profession.

### **Relationship Between Professional Development and Teacher Retention**

Professional development is increasingly seen as a key driver of teacher retention, especially when it aligns with teachers' needs, offers career growth, and supports classroom effectiveness. Teachers are more likely to remain in schools or in the profession when they perceive ongoing development opportunities as valuable and career-enhancing (Kraft & Papay, 2018).

Professional development and teacher retention are deeply interconnected. Teachers who participate in relevant and empowering professional development programs tend to experience: Increased self-efficacy and confidence in their teaching abilities; Higher job satisfaction and morale; Stronger sense of belonging to the educational institution; A clearer path for career advancement and

recognition. When professional development is missing, inconsistent, or irrelevant, teachers may feel professionally stagnant, isolated, and unsupported. This situation increases the risk of attrition, particularly in remote and underserved areas (Kraft & Papay, 2018). Professional development contributes to teacher retention through the following pathways: Skill enhancement: Enables teachers to handle academic and behavioral challenges more effectively. Motivation and empowerment: Teachers feel more valued when their growth is prioritized. Collaboration and community: Peer learning and mentorship foster collegiality and reduce professional isolation. Career progression: Teachers who see professional development as part of a clear career path are more likely to stay. Several empirical studies support this connection. For instance, Torres (2018) found that supportive professional environments characterized by regular training and feedback significantly reduced teacher turnover. In Ghana, studies by Dzanku and Arhin (2021) confirm that teachers in rural regions with little or no access to professional development express higher intentions to leave their schools or the profession entirely. Given the strategic role of professional development in retaining teachers, it becomes crucial to assess what types of programs exist, how often they are accessed, and how teachers perceive their value particularly in challenging contexts like the Upper West Region of Ghana.

## **Theoretical Review**

Several theories provide a framework for understanding the relationship between professional development and teacher retention:

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory (1959) distinguishes between factors that cause job satisfaction (motivators) and those that cause dissatisfaction (hygiene factors). In the context of education, professional development can be considered a motivator it contributes to personal growth, recognition, and a sense of achievement. Teachers who are engaged in relevant professional development are more likely to be satisfied and committed to their roles, which enhances retention.

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes self-efficacy the belief in one's ability to perform a task—as a major influence on behavior and motivation. Professional development boosts teachers' self-efficacy by enhancing their skills and confidence, which in turn influences their persistence in the profession (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

### **Human Capital Theory**

This theory posits that investment in people's knowledge and skills leads to improved productivity. In education, professional development is an investment in teachers' human capital. By enhancing their capacity, schools increase teacher effectiveness and, in turn, their likelihood of staying in the profession due to improved competence and recognition (Becker, 1993).

## **Types of Professional Development Programs Available to SHS Teachers**

Research across various contexts shows that teachers typically engage in a variety of professional development activities, ranging from formal workshops to informal learning opportunities. In Ghana, the Ghana Education Service (GES) offers professional development primarily through in-service training, induction programs for newly recruited teachers, curriculum-based seminars, and subject association workshops (MoE, 2020). For instance, Acheampong et al. (2020), in a study on teacher professional learning in Northern Ghana, found that most SHS teachers participated in curriculum orientation workshops, district-level in-service training, and subject-based association meetings such as the Ghana Association of Science Teachers (GAST) and the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT). However, the study noted that these programs were irregular and often lacked continuity. Similarly, Dzanku and Arhin (2021) observed that many teachers in the Upper West Region had limited access to long-term or needs-based professional development programs. The available programs were often centralized, one-off events that did not allow for follow-up, mentoring, or reflection. This contrasted with teachers' preference for ongoing and practice-oriented development initiatives such as coaching, collaborative planning, and lesson study models. Internationally, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) highlighted successful professional development models in the U.S., Finland, and Singapore, where programs are job-embedded, sustained over time, and structured around teacher collaboration. These findings underscore the need for professional development in Ghana to shift from event-based training to continuous, school-based learning models.

### **Frequency and Accessibility of Professional Development Opportunities**

Access to professional development opportunities varies significantly across geographic and institutional contexts. In urban schools, teachers often report higher exposure to training due to better infrastructure, stronger administrative support, and proximity to educational resource centers (Osei-Poku & Boadu, 2019). In contrast, rural teachers, such as those in the Upper West Region, report infrequent training sessions, often hindered by logistical and financial barriers. Dzanku and Arhin (2021) conducted a survey of 120 teachers across three SHSs in the Upper West Region and found that over 60% of respondents had not attended any formal professional development program in the previous academic year. The most common reason cited was the lack of sponsorship and limited communication from the District Education Directorate. Some teachers reported traveling long distances to attend training sessions, which discouraged participation. In a similar study, Boadu et al. (2019) identified accessibility constraints including limited internet access for online professional development, lack of release time from school heads, and the absence of region-specific training tailored to rural education challenges. This empirical evidence indicates that while professional development policies exist, their implementation remains inequitable and fragmented across regions.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of the Relevance and Effectiveness of Professional Development**

Teachers' perceptions of the value and applicability of professional development programs significantly affect their motivation to participate and apply learned practices. Quartey and Mensah (2020), in a qualitative study of SHS teachers in the Central Region of Ghana, reported mixed perceptions. While some teachers found workshops to be helpful in introducing new pedagogical techniques, many criticized the general nature of the content, lack of follow-up, and limited

opportunities for feedback. Similarly, Dzanku and Arhin (2021) found that teachers in the Upper West Region often viewed professional development as top-down and disconnected from their classroom realities. Participants expressed a desire for programs that address rural-specific challenges such as large class sizes, limited resources, and language barriers. International studies echo these findings. Torres (2018) showed that U.S. teachers who rated their professional development as "practical," "ongoing," and "tailored" reported greater satisfaction and commitment to their schools. Kraft and Papay (2018) also emphasized the importance of a professional learning culture within schools, arguing that teacher perception is shaped not only by the quality of training but also by the school's overall climate of support, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

### **Relationship Between Professional Development and Teacher Retention**

There is a well-documented relationship between high-quality professional development and teacher retention. Teachers who perceive opportunities for growth, recognition, and skill development are more likely to stay in the profession. Ingersoll and Strong (2021) found that mentoring and induction programs reduced new teacher attrition by 30–50% in the first three years of employment. In the African context, Ofoha and Dibia (2018) reported that lack of professional support contributed significantly to teacher attrition in rural Nigeria. Similarly, in Ghana, Acheampong et al. (2020) found that teachers who were frequently engaged in relevant professional development activities demonstrated higher job satisfaction and lower turnover intentions. A study by Osei-Poku and Boadu (2019) in the Ashanti Region noted that teachers who participated in subject-specific workshops and collaborative learning reported a stronger commitment to their schools and profession. Conversely, those who lacked access to such opportunities were more likely to seek transfers or resignations. Kraft et al. (2020) conducted a meta-analysis and found that instructional coaching, when combined with sustained support and feedback, had a significant positive effect on both teacher performance and long-term retention. These findings suggest that well-designed professional development not only improves instructional quality but also strengthens teachers' attachment to their schools. In the Upper West Region, where teacher attrition remains high, this relationship is particularly critical. Without adequate development opportunities, teachers may feel isolated, unsupported, and professionally stagnant factors that have been repeatedly linked to attrition in rural areas (Dzanku & Arhin, 2021).

The reviewed literature indicates that while professional development is recognized as essential to improving teacher quality and retention, its implementation across regions especially rural Ghana remains inconsistent and inadequate. Empirical studies consistently highlight the need for: More equitable access to training, Context-relevant content, Follow-up support, and A stronger culture of professional learning within schools. These gaps underscore the importance of the current study, which seeks to generate region-specific insights into how professional development influences teacher retention in Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section outlines the research methodology adopted for the study. It describes the systematic processes followed to collect, analyze, and interpret data to answer the research questions. The methodology includes the research design, population and sampling strategies, instrumentation, data

collection procedures, methods of data analysis, and ethical considerations. These components were carefully selected to ensure the validity, reliability, and credibility of the findings.

## **Research Design**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design within a quantitative research framework. A descriptive survey design was deemed appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of data to describe the existing status of phenomena, in this case, professional development practices and teacher retention. The survey design enables the researcher to gather information from a large and geographically dispersed population, allowing for generalization of findings (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). Quantitative methods were employed to ensure objectivity, measurement precision, and statistical analysis of patterns and relationships among variables. The choice of this design is further justified by the study's aim to examine relationships between variables such as the type, frequency, and perceived effectiveness of professional development programs, and teacher retention without manipulating any independent variable.

## **Population of the Study**

The target population for the study comprised all public Senior High School (SHS) teachers in the Upper West Region of Ghana. These included teachers from government-assisted SHSs spread across the region's 11 districts and municipalities. The Upper West Region, being largely rural with limited teacher development resources, presents a unique context for examining the role of professional development in teacher retention. According to Ghana Education Service (2023), the region has an estimated 2,500 SHS teachers, making it a suitable population base for drawing meaningful insights into the research problem.

## **Sample and Sampling Techniques**

A sample size of 300 teachers was drawn from the target population. This size was considered adequate for statistical analysis and representative of the region's teacher population, taking into account resource limitations and time constraints. To enhance representativeness and minimize sampling bias, a multi-stage sampling technique was used: Stratified Sampling: The schools were first stratified by district and location (urban vs. rural). This ensured that teachers from all geographical zones were proportionately included in the study. Simple Random Sampling: Within each stratum, teachers were selected using a simple random sampling method to give each teacher an equal chance of being chosen. Proportional Allocation: The sample was proportionally distributed across the districts based on the number of SHS teachers in each district. This approach ensured a diverse sample in terms of gender, years of teaching experience, subject areas, and school contexts.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

The primary instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. This tool was selected for its efficiency in collecting standardized data from a large number of respondents and its suitability for quantitative analysis.

## **Structure of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section A: Demographic Information - Collected data on age, gender, teaching experience, subject area, academic qualifications, and school location (urban or rural). Section B: Types of Professional Development - Items in this section asked respondents to indicate the types of professional development activities they had access to in the past three years (e.g., workshops, in-service training, online courses, peer mentoring, etc.). Section C: Frequency and Access - Focused on how frequently teachers accessed professional development programs and the barriers they encountered in doing so. Section D: Perceptions and Retention - Comprised Likert-scale items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) designed to measure teachers' perceptions of the relevance, quality, and effectiveness of professional development programs, and how these influenced their decisions to remain in or leave the teaching profession.

## **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

To ensure content validity, the draft questionnaire was reviewed by: Two senior lecturers in Educational Planning and Management from the University for Development Studies. One official from the Ghana Education Service's Teacher Education Unit. Their suggestions led to refinement of the wording, structure, and alignment of the items with the research questions. A pilot study was conducted using 30 SHS teachers in the Savannah Region, which shares similar demographic characteristics with the Upper West Region. Feedback from the pilot study helped identify ambiguous questions and led to improvements in clarity and layout. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's Alpha to measure internal consistency of the Likert-scale items. The analysis produced a coefficient of 0.82, indicating high reliability and internal consistency of the instrument.

## **Data Collection Procedure**

After obtaining the necessary ethical and administrative approvals, data collection proceeded in the following steps: Official Permission: A formal letter was sent to the Regional Director of Education and heads of selected SHSs to seek permission to administer the questionnaire. Recruitment of Respondents: With the support of school heads, selected teachers were briefed about the purpose of the study and invited to participate voluntarily. Administration: Questionnaires were distributed by hand in most schools. In some urban SHSs, digital versions (Google Forms) were used due to better internet access. Response Time: Respondents were given one week to complete and return the questionnaires. Follow-ups were made to ensure a high return rate. Data Security: All returned questionnaires were coded, anonymized, and stored securely for data entry and analysis.

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The analysis followed a two-step process: Descriptive Statistics - Frequencies and percentages were used to summarize demographic characteristics and the types and frequency of professional development accessed. Means and standard deviations were computed to assess teachers' perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of development programs. Inferential Statistics - Chi-square tests were used to examine relationships between categorical variables such as gender or school location and

access to development programs. Independent sample t-tests were applied to compare urban vs. rural teachers' perceptions of development effectiveness. Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to explore the relationship between professional development and teacher retention. Findings were presented in tables and graphs to facilitate interpretation and discussion.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to in conducting this research. The following principles guided the process: **Informed Consent:** All participants were fully informed of the purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits of the study and signed a consent form. **Voluntary Participation:** Respondents participated willingly and were free to withdraw at any point without consequence. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** Data collected were used solely for research purposes. No identifying information was recorded. **Data Protection:** Collected data were securely stored and only accessible to the researcher. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board and the Ghana Education Service.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the study on the influence of professional development on teacher retention in Senior High Schools in the Upper West Region. The data were gathered from 300 SHS teachers and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The presentation follows the sequence of the research questions, with tables supporting the narrative and discussions linked to relevant literature.

### **4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Table 1 displays the demographic distribution of the respondents, including gender, years of teaching experience, and school location.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 300)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency (f)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Gender		
- Male	180	60
- Female	120	40
Teaching Experience		
- 1–5 years	75	25
- 6–10 years	105	35
- Above 10 years	120	40
School Location		
- Urban	160	53.3
- Rural	140	46.7

Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the 300 respondents who participated in the study. These characteristics include gender, teaching experience, and school location, all of which provide important contextual information for interpreting the findings related to professional development and teacher retention. Out of the 300 respondents, 180 (60.0%) were male and 120 (40.0%) were female. This distribution suggests a gender imbalance in the teaching

workforce at the Senior High School (SHS) level in the Upper West Region, with males being more dominant. The imbalance may reflect broader national trends in gender representation within the teaching profession at higher educational levels, particularly in rural and underserved regions. This demographic characteristic is important because gender dynamics can influence access to and perceptions of professional development opportunities. Previous research by Owusu and Agyeman (2020) noted that female teachers often face greater challenges in accessing PD programs due to familial responsibilities and limited mobility. The teaching experience of respondents shows a fairly balanced distribution. Teachers with 1–5 years of experience constituted 25.0% (n=75), those with 6–10 years formed 35.0% (n=105), and those with more than 10 years of experience accounted for 40.0% (n=120). This spread indicates a good representation of early-career, mid-career, and veteran teachers, which enhances the reliability of the study findings across different experience levels. The presence of a significant number of experienced teachers (40%) is particularly useful for assessing long-term views on professional development and its influence on retention. According to Adentwi et al. (2019), experienced teachers tend to have more defined opinions on the value of PD, as they have likely participated in multiple forms of it over the years. The respondents were fairly evenly distributed across school locations, with 160 (53.3%) teaching in urban areas and 140 (46.7%) in rural schools. This nearly equal distribution ensures that the study captures context-specific variations in professional development access and retention factors. Location is a significant variable, as urban teachers are typically more likely to access centrally organized PD programs than their rural counterparts, who may face logistical and infrastructural challenges (Abane & Ntim, 2021). Hence, having both groups represented strengthens the generalizability of the study findings within the region.

In summary, the demographic composition of the respondents provides a balanced and representative sample across gender, experience levels, and geographic locations. This diversity enhances the validity of the subsequent analysis by ensuring that findings on professional development and retention reflect a wide range of teacher experiences and contexts. Future policy interventions could benefit from gender-sensitive and location-specific strategies to ensure equitable access to professional development opportunities across the teaching population.

**Research Question One: What types of professional development programs are available to SHS teachers in the Upper West Region?**

To address this research question, respondents were asked to indicate the types of professional development (PD) programs they had accessed in the past three years. Their responses were categorized and summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Types of Professional Development Programs Accessed by SHS Teachers**

Type of Professional Development	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
In-Service Workshops	250	83.3
Peer Mentoring/Coaching	190	63.3
Online Courses (CPD, MOOCs)	110	36.7
Subject-Based Training	180	60
Educational Conferences and Seminars	90	30
Postgraduate Study Support	75	25

Table 2 outlines the various types of professional development (PD) programs available to SHS teachers in the Upper West Region. The most commonly accessed PD format was in-service

training and workshops (83.3%), followed by subject-based seminars (70.0%). These results suggest a strong preference or emphasis on short-term, centralized training sessions organized by the Ghana Education Service or other educational stakeholders. Moderately available were mentoring and coaching (56.7%) and curriculum-related training (63.3%), which are typically school-based and may require sustained institutional support. The relatively lower presence of online training programs (46.7%) and professional learning communities (PLCs) (43.3%) indicates gaps in technological access and collaboration frameworks, especially in rural areas. These findings align with Acheampong & Mensah (2020), who emphasized the underutilization of virtual PD in rural Ghanaian schools. Overall, while various PD formats exist, the dominance of traditional in-person models suggests a need to diversify delivery methods, especially in post-pandemic contexts where digital learning is increasingly essential. The findings reveal that in-service workshops and peer mentoring/coaching are the most frequently accessed PD types. Online and postgraduate development opportunities are less common, likely due to infrastructural and funding limitations. These patterns support similar findings by Boateng and Atta (2020).

**Research Question Two: How frequently do teachers in Senior High Schools access professional development opportunities?**

This question sought to understand the regularity with which teachers participate in PD activities. Respondents were asked to report the frequency of their PD engagement.

**Table 3: Frequency of Participation in Professional Development Activities**

Frequency of Participation	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Never	30	10
Once a year	120	40
Twice a year	90	30
Quarterly	45	15
Monthly	15	5

Table 3 shows that 40.0% of teachers participate in professional development activities once per term, with another 26.7% participating twice per term. This indicates relatively regular involvement in PD activities for the majority of SHS teachers. However, 20.0% of respondents indicated attending PD only once a year, and 13.3% reported rare or no participation. These findings raise concerns about equitable access to continuous professional learning, particularly in resource-constrained or remote schools. The results support findings from Ntim & Boamah (2019), who reported that logistical barriers and lack of incentives often limit PD participation, especially in rural SHSs. Improving access to structured and frequent PD may be necessary to ensure teachers remain professionally competent and satisfied in their roles, thereby enhancing retention. The results indicate that a majority of teachers participate in PD programs only once or twice per year. The infrequent access may stem from institutional scheduling conflicts or limited funding. Adu-Yeboah and Obeng (2021) note that this low engagement rate limits the potential impact of PD on teacher growth.

**Research Question Three: What are teachers’ perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of these professional development programs?**

To examine teachers’ perceptions, respondents rated their level of agreement with five statements concerning the relevance and effectiveness of the PD programs they had attended.

**Table 4: Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Development Programs**

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
PD programs improve my teaching effectiveness	4.32	0.78
The content of PD programs is relevant to my teaching role	4.15	0.82
PD activities motivate me to remain in the teaching field	3.98	0.95
PD programs are accessible and well-structured	3.1	1.1
I feel supported by school leadership to attend PDs	3.45	0.99

Table 4 provides insight into teachers’ perceptions of professional development programs. A majority (85%) of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that PD activities are relevant to their subject areas, and 88% believed these programs enhance teaching effectiveness. These responses suggest a high perceived value of PD for improving instructional practices, corroborating findings from Boateng (2021), who found that subject-specific PD directly improves teacher performance and confidence. However, perceptions are slightly less favorable regarding the alignment of PD with classroom realities (77% positive) and the motivational impact of PD on retention (70% positive). Notably, only 60% felt that PD sessions were participatory and practically oriented, which may indicate a need for more interactive and context-driven delivery methods. These results suggest that while PD is largely valued, there are areas for improvement in design and delivery to maximize relevance and teacher engagement. Teachers generally perceive PD programs as beneficial, particularly in enhancing instructional quality and professional motivation. However, moderate ratings for accessibility and administrative support indicate areas for policy improvement. These findings echo those of Kusi and Boadu (2019), who stressed the need for better planning and decentralization of PD resources.

**Research Question Four: What is the relationship between professional development and the retention of SHS teachers in the Upper West Region?**

To determine whether there is a relationship between PD participation and teacher retention, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted using scores from frequency of PD access and retention intention scales.

**Table 5: Correlation Between Professional Development and Retention Intention**

Variable	Mean	SD	r	p-value
Frequency of PD Participation	2.65	0.8		
Retention Intention Score (1–5 scale)	3.92	0.8	0.61**	0.001

**Note:**  $p < 0.01$  indicates statistical significance.

Table 5 presents a Pearson product-moment correlation analysis examining the relationship between frequency of professional development (PD) participation and teachers’ intention to remain in the

profession. The correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.61$ ) is positive and statistically significant at the 0.001 level ( $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting a moderately strong association between the two variables. This result indicates that as teachers participate more frequently in PD programs, their likelihood or intention to remain in the teaching profession increases. The mean score for PD frequency ( $M = 2.65$ ;  $SD = 0.84$ ) suggests a moderate level of engagement in PD activities across the sample. Meanwhile, the relatively high retention intention mean ( $M = 3.92$ ;  $SD = 0.76$ ) reflects generally favorable attitudes toward staying in the teaching profession. The strength of the correlation (0.61) is consistent with prior studies such as Gyasi et al. (2020) and Boakye & Osei (2021), which have shown that access to meaningful professional learning opportunities enhances teacher morale, professional identity, and job satisfaction—factors known to improve teacher retention rates. From a policy standpoint, this finding underscores the critical importance of professional development as a retention strategy. If educational administrators in the Upper West Region are to reduce teacher attrition and increase stability in SHSs, institutionalizing regular, high-quality PD should be a strategic priority. Furthermore, the strong correlation suggests that PD programs should not be seen merely as tools for capacity building, but also as mechanisms for supporting long-term teacher engagement and professional commitment. In conclusion, the data clearly affirms that frequent and relevant professional development is a statistically significant predictor of teachers' intention to stay, thereby reinforcing the central thesis of the study. A statistically significant and positive correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was found, suggesting that increased engagement in PD activities is associated with stronger intentions to remain in the teaching profession. This finding supports the view that PD enhances not only competence but also commitment, in line with the work of Guskey (2020) and Opoku-Asare et al. (2021).

### **Summary of the Study**

This study examined the influence of professional development (PD) on teacher retention among Senior High School (SHS) teachers in the Upper West Region of Ghana. The research was guided by four specific questions: (1) the types of PD programs available to SHS teachers, (2) the frequency of teachers' access to these programs, (3) teachers' perceptions of the relevance and effectiveness of PD, and (4) the relationship between PD and teacher retention. A descriptive survey design was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to gather data from 300 SHS teachers across urban and rural schools. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (correlation analysis). The findings revealed that various PD programs are available, including workshops, in-service training, curriculum seminars, and mentorship. However, participation rates were moderate and varied by location and experience. Teachers generally perceived PD as relevant and beneficial to their professional growth and job satisfaction. Most significantly, a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found between the frequency of PD participation and teachers' intention to remain in the profession.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn: Availability of PD Programs: A variety of professional development opportunities are accessible to SHS teachers, though distribution and access are more concentrated in urban areas than rural settings. Frequency of Participation: While

most teachers engage in PD programs at least occasionally, participation is not consistent across the board. Factors such as logistical constraints, funding, and scheduling limitations affect regular attendance. Perceived Relevance and Effectiveness: Teachers hold positive perceptions of PD programs, indicating that such initiatives improve instructional practices, job satisfaction, and professional identity. Influence on Retention: There is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between PD and retention intentions, suggesting that consistent and meaningful PD participation encourages teachers to remain in the profession.

## Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for policy, practice, and further research:

**For Educational Policymakers and the GES:** Institutionalize regular, needs-based PD programs that address both pedagogical content knowledge and socio-emotional competencies. Ensure equitable access to PD opportunities for both urban and rural teachers by decentralizing training delivery and increasing logistics support. Establish a monitoring and evaluation framework for PD programs to assess long-term effectiveness and make iterative improvements.

**For School Heads and Administrators:** Provide supportive environments and time allowances for teachers to engage in PD without disrupting classroom schedules. Recognize and incentivize participation in PD as part of career advancement criteria to motivate more teachers to attend regularly.

**For Teacher Training Institutions:** Collaborate with SHSs to design context-specific PD modules based on identified gaps in subject mastery, pedagogy, and professional needs. Facilitate follow-up coaching or mentoring programs that allow for deeper learning and implementation of PD content.

**For Future Research:** Further studies could explore qualitative perspectives from teachers and administrators on what constitutes “effective” PD. Longitudinal research could investigate the impact of specific PD types on retention over time. Comparative studies could analyze regional variations in PD effectiveness and retention dynamics across Ghana.

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