

Teacher Professional Development in Higher Education: Perspective of Non-Native Chinese Language Teachers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative design approach, this research explores the perceptions of Six Nigerian non-native Chinese language teachers (NNCLTs) regarding their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities, highlighting its accessibility, relevance, usefulness, and significance in enhancing teaching quality and professional growth. With Andragogy theory underpinning this study, various CPD activities of Nigerian NNCLTs were identified which includes workshops, seminars, and international exchanges. Findings reveal that while many Nigerian NNCLTs recognize the importance of CPD for their professional development, they face significant barriers such as financial constraints, inadequate logistical support, and a lack of tailored content that addresses their specific needs. Participants expressed mixed feelings about the usefulness of CPD programs, with some reporting positive impacts on their teaching practices, while others criticized the relevance and organization of the training. The study underscores the necessity for improved CPD frameworks that are responsive to the unique needs of NNCLTs, emphasizing the importance of consultation and collaboration in program design. Additionally, the research highlights the value of more international professional development opportunities, which were perceived as beneficial for networking and skill enhancement. Finally, the study offers recommendations for enhancing CPD initiatives, thereby contributing to the overall quality of Chinese language education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, Non-native Chinese language teachers, Professional Development, Chinese language Nigeria, Teacher development

INTRODUCTION

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs are crucial for ensuring teachers' ongoing growth and effectiveness (Ajani, 2021). Teachers ought to receive regular, high-quality professional development training that is ongoing and consistent, with the goal of improving classroom practices (Ryan, 2007; Egbo, 2011), however, there is limited engagement in CPD initiatives such as workshops, seminars, conferences, ICT training, and mentoring programs, and this indicates insufficient participation (Akegwu et al., 2013). Furthermore, as cited in Abakah, (2023), numerous CPD activities and interventions fail to yield enduring learning outcomes that enable teachers to transform their classroom practices (Shriki & Patkin, 2016), certain programs are misaligned with or irrelevant to the actual needs of teachers in the classroom, thereby hindering the intended teacher development. (Abdulrazak, 2020; Abakah, 2019). These issues contribute to the ineffectiveness of CPD in academic institutions, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding of how

these programs can be improved.

Against this backdrop, the growing demand for Chinese language education has led to a sharp increase in the number of non-native Chinese language teachers (NNCLTs) (Gu et al., 2021), also referred to as Local Chinese language teacher (LCLTs) (Okafor, 2021) or Indigenous Chinese language teachers (ICLTs). As China continues to advance in economy, science, technology, and education, the need for teaching and learning the Chinese language as a second or foreign language has grown significantly. Chinese Studies departments and Confucius Institutes play a vital role in promoting and facilitating Chinese language education and cultural exchange both locally and internationally. Gu et al. (2021) reported that over 4,000 universities worldwide offer Chinese language courses, with more than 25 million individuals currently engaged in learning the language. Africa currently has 54 Confucius Institutes and 30 Confucius Classrooms established across 41 countries, with Nigeria alone having over 50,000 Chinese language learners (Yu, et al 2024), two Confucius Institutes and Chinese Studies department (Okafor, 2020). To support this growing interest, many NNCLTs have completed a Master's program in Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages (MTCOSOL) and are employed in Chinese Studies departments and Confucius Institutes at institutions like the University of Lagos and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, while others teach in Chinese language training centers.

CPD is a crucial aspect of NNCLTs that will ensure the ongoing growth and improvement of teachers' knowledge, skills, and practices (Okafor, 2021), and majority of the non-native Chinese language teachers have, over the years, engaged in CPD. These CPD programs, activities, training, and learning were either structured, reflective, or self-directed. Given the critical role of CPD in maintaining and enhancing the teaching quality of NNCLTs, this research seeks to explore their perceptions of CPD activities. Specifically, it aims to understand how NNCLTs view the CPD programs and activities, focusing on the access, availability, and usefulness of CPD programs that are either self-directed or provided by universities and/or the Ministry of Education, whether in Nigeria or China, and including international visits and exchanges. The research is structured around the overarching research question: How do NNCLTs at Nigerian universities perceive the CPD programs and activities? Addressing this question is significant as it offers insights into the access, availability, usefulness, and challenges faced by NNCLTs in Nigeria. It also provides recommendations for enhancing CPD programs, ultimately contributing to the quality of Chinese language education in the Nigeria context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers' professional development is a pivotal component in enhancing educational systems, teacher quality, organizational effectiveness, and ultimately, student outcomes (Borg, 2015; Borghouts et al., 2021). Professional training and development is an effective tool for teacher's high productivity in the academia (Halidu, 2015), however effective PD is not solely about improving teachers but also significantly influences student learning and achievement (Melesse & Gulie, 2019; Ganser, 2000). Ganser (2000) elaborates on the different nature of professional development, categorizing it into formal experiences—such as seminars, workshops, and mentoring—and informal experiences, including self-directed learning through professional literature and media. The process of teachers' professional development can be understood through two key stages: initial preparation and continued professional development (CPD) (Fareo, 2013). CPD is characterized as a continuous learning process, where teachers engage in both formal educational programs and informal learning experiences that arise in their daily work environments (Abakah, 2023; Collin, 2012; Fullen, 1995). These training and Development programs are the framework for helping employees to develop their personal and professional skills, knowledge, and abilities (Kulkarni, 2013). It enhances teachers' skills and knowledge, fostering their professional growth. Akuegwu et al. (2013) emphasize that CPD programs have transformed the university system by facilitating the exchange of ideas and experiences, thereby contributing to the

achievement of institutional goals. Hustler et al. (2003) propose a framework for investigating teachers' perceptions of CPD, which includes establishing a baseline of teachers' past experiences, current attitudes, and future expectations regarding CPD. This framework is essential for monitoring the impact of CPD strategies on educators' experiences and informing governmental policies on CPD investments. However, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of CPD. The OECD (2009) identifies factors such as inadequate qualifications, insufficient employer support, family obligations, high costs, limited access to appropriate professional development opportunities, and conflicts with work schedules.

In the Nigerian context, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) underscores the critical importance of ongoing professional development for teachers. According to Section 8 of the policy, in-service training is designated as an essential component of continuous teacher education, addressing existing inadequacies. The policy further emphasizes that enhancing the quality of education at all levels necessitates the implementation of regular in-service training programs for teachers and school administrators. These provisions highlight the imperative for continuous professional development of educators to strengthen the Nigerian educational system and ensure the delivery of high-quality education across all levels. Teachers' CPD is one of the most dominant social services that has enhanced the development of Nigeria in the past years (Oduaran, 2015), thus both theoretical and empirical studies have explored CPD's efficacy. Research indicates that teachers who participate in staff development programs exhibit higher job performance compared to their non-participating counterparts. The impact of CPD on teacher effectiveness is evident, as studies show that teachers who engage in CPD programs demonstrate significant improvements in their curriculum knowledge and teaching practices (Okorie & Nwagbo, 2015). This underscores the importance of investing in in-service education to promote teachers' professional growth and development (Osamwonyi, 2016). Research conducted by Patrick and Okafor (2021) sheds light on the perceptions of higher education lecturers in Anambra State regarding CPD activities. Their mixed-methods study reveals that while lecturers recognize the importance of CPD, they express concerns about program content, time management, and financial support. Therefore, challenges persist in implementing CPD programs in Nigeria, primarily due to inadequate funding and mismanagement of resources, which adversely affect institutional provisions for teachers' participation in professional development activities (Patrick & Okafor, 2021). The emergence of distance learning has introduced new avenues for CPD in Nigeria, offering flexibility and accessibility. Moreover, the level of information and communication technology (ICT) proficiency significantly impacts teachers' effectiveness in various domains, including classroom instruction and research (Akpan, 2014; Adeoye et al., 2013). However, challenges such as a lack of rigorous standards and oversight remain prevalent (Ken-Maduako, 2011). Despite these challenges, some regions have successfully adopted capacity-building initiatives, such as ICT training for lecturers, demonstrating effective strategies for enhancing teacher development (Adeoye, et al 2013). Additionally, Cortezano et al. (2021) explored educators' experiences with CPD during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing that while the pandemic necessitated a shift to remote learning, it also provided opportunities for innovative CPD practices. Teachers reported that online platforms facilitated collaboration and resource sharing, enriching their professional development experiences. To enhance CPD in Nigeria, lessons can be drawn from best practices observed in other countries (Adagiri, 2014). Establishing clear CPD policies, ensuring adequate funding, and involving teachers in the design and implementation of CPD activities are crucial steps toward improving teacher professional development.

Theoretical framework

The theory underpinning this study is Andragogy. Andragogy, also called adult learning theory (Veiga-Branco, 2018), is a term first mentioned by German teacher Kapp in 1833 and later popularized by Malcolm Knowles (Kessels, 2014), refers to the art and science of adult learning (Knowles, 1984). This theory stands in contrast to pedagogy, which focuses on the education of children (Knowles, 1980). Andragogy, as outlined by Knowles, is based on five key assumptions about adult learners (Veiga-Branco, 2018). These assumptions include: the

shift from dependency to self-direction as adults prefer to control their learning experiences; the use of their rich life experiences as a resource in the learning process; a readiness to learn driven by the need to address real-life challenges or fulfill specific roles; a problem-centered orientation that seeks immediate application of knowledge; and motivation that is primarily intrinsic, often linked to personal or professional goals. Additionally, Knowles identified four principles that guide adult learning: active involvement in planning and evaluating their learning, the use of their experiences in learning activities, ensuring content is relevant to their lives, and focusing instruction on solving real-world problems. Understanding the principles of andragogy is essential for designing effective training programs and tailoring educational approaches to meet the unique needs of adult learners, particularly in contexts like continuing professional development. Ultimately, Knowles' framework emphasizes the unique characteristics and needs of adult learners, making it particularly relevant in various educational contexts, including professional development for non-native Chinese language teachers in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a qualitative research method to explore how NNCLTs at Nigerian universities perceive their CPD programs and activities. The qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it allows for a more in-depth exploration of the NNCLTs' experiences, perceptions, and opinions regarding their CPD programs. Online interviews using WhatsApp voice call, were conducted with six (6) in-service NNCLTs teaching at Chinese Studies departments and Confucius Institutes in two prominent Nigerian universities: Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and the University of Lagos. These institutions were selected because they are the only universities in Nigeria with Confucius Institutes and Chinese Studies departments that offer Chinese language courses at the bachelor's degree level, making them representative of the few institutions in Nigeria that currently have Chinese centers, Confucius classrooms, or hope to start a Chinese language program in the future. Online WhatsApp interview was selected as the data collection method due to the geographical distance between the researcher and the participants, which made face-to-face interviews challenging. The use of online interviews however provided flexibility for the participants, allowing them to choose a convenient time and location for the interview. The interview lasted for about 30 minutes per participant, and was recorded using phone audio recorder with the consent of the participants.

The interview questions were designed to elicit NNCLTs' assessments of their CPD programs and activities, focusing on three key areas: 1) access and availability of CPD programs, 2) perceptions of the usefulness of CPD, and 3) challenges faced in accessing and participating in CPD. The interview recordings were transcribed, and thematic analysis was employed to examine and interpret the qualitative data collected from the interviews, with the aim of identifying recurring themes and patterns that capture the NNCLTs' experiences and opinions regarding their CPD.

To ensure confidentiality, the data collected and the participants of the interview were coded as follows: NNCLT1, NNCLT2, NNCLT3, NNCLT4, NNCLT5, and NNCLT6. The study only included NNCLTs who had taught Chinese for a minimum of two years and have participated in CPD programs in their teaching career.

RESULTS

Conceptualizing CPD

Participants expressed diverse understandings of CPD, highlighting that CPD encompasses a broader spectrum of activities, such as conversations, hands-on experiences, and workshops that facilitate introspection on pedagogical methods and subject matter. For instance, NNCLT5 stated, “*Continuing professional development*

consists of conversations, experiences, and workshops that help inform and permit introspection on pedagogical methods and subject matter.” Many identified personal development through in-service training, staff meetings, and formal courses as the most important factor. As NNCLT2 articulated, “Developing myself professionally through in-service training, staff meetings, and courses, as well as anything else that I can do to increase my professionalism, is what I believe to be the most important factor”. The Respondents further showed good understanding of what CPD entails by acknowledging that CPD extends beyond training and workshops, encompassing a variety of activities, including: “Working alongside colleagues, networking, and visiting other schools; Online courses and lectures; Translation work experience, engaging in Masters or doctorate degree programs, and conducting research and fieldwork with colleagues and students; Professional development opportunities abroad for non-native Chinese language teachers; Mentoring and induction processes”

Relevance and Usefulness of CPD Programs

The majority of interviewed participants believed that the CPD programs they attended were useful and beneficial to their career development. NNCLT2, NNCLT5, and NNCLT6 stated, “*Very effective,*” while NNCLT3 expressed, “*I learned a lot*”. The participants further agreed that CPD programs and activities were helpful in satisfying the career needs of non-native Chinese language teachers. NNCLT2 stated, “*Programs and activities for continuing professional development are quite helpful in satisfying the career needs of non-native Chinese language teachers. Participating in various in-service training activities has been of great use to me.*” NNCLT5 added, “*I think they are fairly valuable. Some staff training activities I attended are good, since there are a lot of people, especially new ones like me entering into the field, who don't know a lot of stuff and are faced with a great number of challenges...*”

However, a minority voiced skepticism, citing organizational issues owing to lack of consultation and appropriate identification of needs as a barrier to effectiveness. For instance, NNCLT1 commented, “*I think they are not much effective,*” and NNCLT4 noted, “*Not very beneficial because of the way it is organized.*” These participants further complained that the CPD programs they attended were a waste of time and money because they were not applicable to the challenges faced by non-native Chinese language teachers. As a NNCLT4 expressed, “*I believe that the conferences and seminars on teaching that I went to in Nigeria were a waste of my time and money because the topics that were discussed are not applicable to the challenges faced by non-native Chinese language teachers. I didn't feel like I was given much direction, I wasn't totally impressed, and I didn't think it was a valuable use of my time at all. ...To teach Chinese as a non-native Chinese language teachers is a very difficult task; hence, I require conferences and seminars that will examine the characteristics and difficulties I face in this line of work.*” Some admitted that their institutions lacked a specific plan for CPD for non-native Chinese language teachers, as articulated by NNCLT1: “*The institution does not have a specific plan for continuing professional development for non-native Chinese language teachers. As a result, I believe that have an obvious role to play in the continuing professional development activities of non-native Chinese language teachers.*” NNCLT4 further criticized the relevance of CPD programs, stating, “*I believe that it is irrelevant, particularly because the majority of those who lead continuing professional development activities in Nigeria for non-native Chinese language teachers are people who either don't teach Chinese language or are no longer in tune with Chinese language.*” These participants suggested a need for additional consultation to improve the relevance of CPD offerings as highlighted by NNCLT1: “*I believe that there is need to embark on proper consultation and appropriate identification of needs.*”

International Professional Development Opportunities

Five non-native Chinese language teachers provided details of overseas trips or exchanges they had

participated in. During school breaks, they visited and engaged in exchanges at various universities in China, including Xiamen University, East China Normal University, and Beijing Normal University. The duration of these visits ranged from one week to three weeks. Participants expressed positive views about these experiences, with NNCLT6 stating, *“What I learned is extremely valuable and relevant,”* and NNCLT3 describing it as *“illuminating, interesting, refreshing, and fun.”* Others noted that it was *“quite an experience,” “quite useful and relevant,”* and *“quite remarkable.”* NNCLT1 highlighted it as a great the opportunity to network with non-native Chinese language teachers from other parts of the world, stating, *“I met non-native Chinese language teachers from other parts of the world, and we shared our experiences on personal development and professional progress.”* Overall, these international professional development opportunities were perceived as extremely beneficial for the participants' careers as non-native Chinese language teachers.

Access to CPD Programs

Access to CPD programs emerged as a significant concern among participants. Financial constraints and logistical challenges hindered their participation in valuable training opportunities. As NNCLT4 expressed, *“I do not have the financial means to participate in any personal development programs at this time Help for early career teachers to participate in continuing professional development programs that require significant financial investment should come from the government and the school management.”* Another participant noted the difficulty in finding support for travel, stating, *“Because it was very difficult for me to find someone to support my travel, I was unable to participate in the international non-native Chinese language teachers training that was held in Shanghai. As a result, I believe that there are still significant barriers to entry for many of the CPD programs.”* A respondent further highlighted the lack of access to effective CPD programs, stating, *“Since we do not have any effective continuing professional development programs, the non-native Chinese language teachers in this area are ignored and must find their own means to advance in their careers.”* The need for incorporating ICT training into CPD programs was also emphasized by NNCLT4, who said, *“Because we do not have sufficient access to ICT training I was not able to cope with online training that i engage in sometime last year, so I would like to see ICT programs incorporated into CPD so that I may improve my knowledge and skills in this area.”*

Some participants also felt that they are not given assess to some cpd programs by school management, *for instance, NNCLT1 articulated: “...the interests of non-native Chinese language teachers are not taken into account. Activities such as field trip, summer camps in China are being hijacked by school management here. The vast majority of the time, non-native Chinese language teachers are overlooked in favor of teachers from other departments and majors who are selected to participate in the program.”*

Impact of CPD on Professional Development

Participants were asked to explain the impact of CPD on their professional development, teaching quality, student learning outcomes, and the level of commitment among non-native Chinese language teachers at their universities. The responses indicated both positive and negative effects.

Positive Impact of CPD

The majority of non-native Chinese language teachers believed that CPD had a positive influence on their professional development and teaching quality. As NNCLT3 stated, *“Participating in the CPD program has had a good influence on both my life and my profession. My participation in the CPD program allowed me to network with other non-native Chinese language teachers as well as faculty members from other departments.”* NNCLT6 expressed, *“I believe that participating in the CPD program has instilled in me a greater desire to advance my skills as a teacher of the Chinese language.”* Participants also noted that CPD had made them better teachers, allowed them to learn from their peers and engage in a wider variety of extracurricular

activities, familiarized them with diverse teaching approaches, and provided them with various perspectives and strategies for instructing a wide range of subjects. NNCLT2 highlighted the benefits in interacting with students, stating, *“I believe that continuing professional development activities have been very helpful to me in enhancing the way that I interact with student from a variety of viewpoints.”*

Negative Impact of CPD

However, some participants perceived CPD as an additional burden that detracted from their core teaching responsibilities. NNCLT3 expressed, *“I think is more like an extra task because sometimes the activities we are required to do isn't always compatible with what we need to do here.”* Another from NNCLT1 stated, *“It makes me less focused on my teaching job, which is a problem for me. ...Especially all of the training and programs that are completely unnecessary and have nothing to do with teaching Chinese culture and language to students.”* NNCLT4 further noted the negative impact on their professional life, stating, *“This is not the best environment for mentoring. I have been given an excessive amount of work, and at times I am required to behave against my will. It had a detrimental effect on my professional life.”*

DISCUSSION

The findings of the paper on CPD for NNCLTs in Nigeria reveal significant insights into the perceptions, effectiveness, and challenges of CPD programs, while also highlighting areas of convergence and divergence with existing literature. The research underscores the critical role of CPD in enhancing the professional growth of NNCLTs, who are increasingly vital in meeting the rising demand for Chinese language education in Nigeria. The study identifies that while many NNCLTs acknowledge the importance of CPD for their career development, there are substantial concerns regarding the accessibility, relevance, and organization of these programs.

Participants expressed a diverse understanding of CPD, identifying it not only as formal training but also as informal learning experiences that contribute to their professional development. This aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of CPD, which includes both structured and unstructured learning opportunities (Ganser, 2000; Fullen, 1995). However, the study also reveals a divergence from the literature in terms of the perceived usefulness of CPD programs. While many participants found CPD beneficial, a notable minority expressed skepticism about the relevance and applicability of the training they received, particularly when the content did not address their specific challenges as NNCLTs. This concern echoes findings from Patrick and Okafor (2021), who noted that lecturers in Nigeria often feel that CPD programs lack adequate support and relevance to their needs. Moreover, the paper highlights significant barriers to accessing CPD programs, including financial constraints and logistical challenges, which hinder participation in valuable training opportunities. This is consistent with the OECD (2009) report identifying similar challenges in the broader context of CPD, such as inadequate employer support and limited access to appropriate professional development opportunities. However, the study uniquely emphasizes the specific context of NNCLTs in Nigeria, illustrating how these barriers are compounded by the unique demands of teaching Chinese language, which is a foreign language, in a non-native context.

The findings also shed light on the perceived impact of CPD on professional development and teaching quality. Most participants reported positive influences on their teaching practices, which aligns with the literature suggesting that effective CPD can lead to improved teacher performance and student outcomes (Okorie & Nwagbo, 2015). However, some respondents articulated that CPD activities often detracted from their core teaching responsibilities, suggesting a divergence from the ideal scenario where CPD complements rather than competes with teaching duties. This reflects a broader concern in the literature about the potential for CPD to become an additional burden rather than a supportive resource (Hustler et al., 2003). Furthermore, the study's

exploration of international professional development opportunities reveals a positive reception among participants, who found these experiences enriching and beneficial for their professional growth. This aligns with the literature advocating for global exchanges and collaborations as effective means of enhancing teacher development (Adagiri, 2014). However, the accessibility of such opportunities remains a concern, as financial and logistical barriers often limit participation, reflecting a need for systemic changes to facilitate broader access to international CPD.

Finally, findings from the study align closely with the principles of Andragogy. The participants' emphasis on self-directed learning through diverse CPD activities they have attended such as in-service training, workshops, and hands-on experiences, reflects Knowles' Andragogy theory assumption on “self concept” and “readiness to learn”. The relevance and practical application of CPD programs, particularly those that address real-life challenges faced by NNCLTs, align with the andragogical principle of “problem-centered learning”. Additionally, the participants' desire for CPD activities that are tailored to their specific needs and career goals underscores the importance of intrinsic “motivation to learn”, another key element of Andragogy.

Suggestions for Addressing CPD for NNCLTs in Nigeria

The challenge of CPD for NNCLTs in Nigerian universities requires a comprehensive approach to address both systemic and individual issues. Firstly, there is a critical need for increased awareness among academic institutions, particularly universities, about the importance of CPD for these teachers. This should focus on the role of CPD in fostering professional growth and improving educational outcomes. It is also crucial to develop rigorous evaluation and accountability mechanisms for CPD programs that balance institutional development goals with the personal career aspirations of teachers. This ensures that CPD initiatives support both systemic objectives and the individual growth of educators.

In addition, NNCLTs need greater exposure to the lifelong learning aspects of CPD. Opportunities for professional development should be accessible to teachers at different stages of their careers, with programs tailored to their specific professional needs and goals. As Govender and Ajani (2021) highlight, a "one-size-fits-all" approach is inadequate for meeting individual teacher needs. By reorganizing CPD programs, educational institutions can offer more personalized pathways for professional development that resonate with the unique experiences of these teachers.

Furthermore, it is vital that the Nigerian and Chinese governments, alongside educational policymakers, prioritize CPD for NNCLTs. This would not only improve the quality of Chinese language instruction but also foster a deeper appreciation of Chinese culture within Nigerian education. Governments should allocate more resources to support CPD initiatives, ensuring these programs align with the specific needs of individual educators.

CPD programs should be designed to accommodate the demanding schedules of NNCLTs, minimizing stress and promoting engagement. Short, enjoyable, and memorable programs can foster a positive atmosphere that encourages participation. Additionally, integrating discussions on personal well-being, health, and work-life balance into CPD programs can contribute to the holistic development of teachers.

Another key recommendation is to offer opportunities for NNCLTs to observe lessons conducted by native Chinese teachers, particularly at Confucius Institutes. These observations can provide valuable insights into teaching practices and cultural nuances, enriching the pedagogical skills of non-native teachers. Encouraging peer coaching and mentoring within educational institutions can further support professional growth and collaboration, helping teachers overcome challenges such as geographical isolation and limited access to professional networks.

Systemic changes in funding are also essential to support these improvements. Both government and school management should increase financial resources for CPD programs and ensure that local Chinese language teachers have access to these funds especially for attending international exchanges and conferences in China. Prioritizing individual needs in resource allocation will enable teachers to pursue CPD opportunities that align with their professional development goals. Addressing infrastructural deficiencies, bureaucratic hurdles, and other systemic barriers will further enhance the effectiveness of CPD programs.

Finally, heads of departments, Confucius Institute leaders, and CPD coordinators also require professional development to better understand the structural, cultural, and career-stage factors that influence their staff's CPD needs. This understanding is essential for creating a supportive environment that fosters meaningful CPD experiences. By considering the career trajectories and aspirations of individual NNCLTs, educational institutions can offer CPD programs that meet diverse needs and transform the CPD landscape for non-native Chinese language teachers in Nigeria. This, in turn, will lead to improved teaching quality, better student outcomes, and a more dynamic educational environment.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study underscore the critical importance of CPD for NNCLTs in Nigerian universities. The data reveals that perceptions of CPD vary significantly among NNCLTs, with many acknowledging its potential to enhance professional growth through structured training, workshops, and collaborative activities. However, the effectiveness of these programs is often undermined by inadequate planning, lack of relevance to specific teaching challenges, and insufficient institutional support. Participants expressed a desire for CPD initiatives that not only align with their professional aspirations but also consider the unique contexts in which they operate. Moreover, the study highlights the necessity for a strategic approach to CPD that prioritizes individual needs while fostering a supportive environment for professional development. Policymakers and educational institutions must collaborate to increase funding, improve program design, and ensure that CPD activities are engaging and accessible. Furthermore, opportunities for mentorship, peer coaching, and observation of experienced educators should be integrated into CPD frameworks to enhance learning outcomes. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth, stakeholders can ensure that non-native Chinese language teachers are well-equipped to meet the demands of their profession and effectively disseminate Chinese language and culture in Nigeria, thereby enriching the educational experience for students.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study primarily revolve around the small sample size. With only six participants from two Nigerian universities, the findings may not fully represent the experiences of all non-native Chinese language teachers (NNCLTs) across Nigeria. For future research, a broader, more diverse sample size that includes NNCLTs from other institutions and different career stages would provide a more comprehensive understanding of CPD programs. Future studies should also explore the impact of CPD on student learning outcomes, as well as the role of institutional support in facilitating or hindering NNCLTs' professional development. Expanding the scope to include comparative studies between NNCLTs and native Chinese teachers will also yield valuable insights.

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