JETIR.ORG ISSN: 2349-5162 | ESTD Year : 2014 | Monthly Issue
JOURNAL OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIVE RESEARCH (JETIR)
An International Scholarly Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

PERCEPTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY TEACHERS TOWARD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMAS

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ABSTRACT

The Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) is a mandatory qualification for graduate teachers in Sri Lanka, essential for securing salary increments and advancing within the educational hierarchy. While the PGDE serves to standardize teaching practices and ensure career progression, it does not specifically address the specialized expertise needed by technology teachers. This study investigates technology teachers' perceptions of professional development, focusing on their views toward the PGDE and other specialized postgraduate diplomas. The research aims to explore the alignment (or lack thereof) between the PGDE and the professional development needs of technology teachers.

The findings reveal a strong preference among technology teachers for specialized postgraduate diplomas over the PGDE. This preference is driven by the perceived inadequacy of the PGDE in providing the deep, subject-specific knowledge that technology teachers require for career satisfaction and effective teaching. Teachers highlighted the need for qualifications that directly enhance their technical expertise and professional growth, rather than a general pedagogical qualification.

This study underscores the importance of balancing general pedagogical training with subject-specific professional development opportunities. It also highlights an increasing disillusionment among technology teachers with the current system, leading to thoughts of transitioning to alternative career paths. These concerns are attributed to the perceived low social and economic recognition of the teaching profession. The findings emphasize the urgent need for educational policymakers to reconsider the role of professional development in technology education and make necessary adjustments to improve teacher retention and attract new talent.

The study utilizes a quantitative methodology, employing an online survey to gather data from technology teachers specializing in Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT). A total of 732 responses were collected, resulting in a response rate of 52.96%. The survey was distributed through multiple channels, including WhatsApp, phone calls, and Facebook, ensuring broad participation. Key research questions addressed in the survey include:

1. What are the perceptions of technology teachers toward professional development?
2. How do technology teachers perceive the impact of the PGDE requirement on their ability to pursue subject-specific postgraduate diplomas?

The findings reveal that technology teachers prefer specialized postgraduate diplomas over the PGDE due to the former's relevance to their subject-specific needs and career goals. Teachers expressed concerns that the PGDE's general pedagogical focus limits their opportunities for professional growth in their specialized fields, thus affecting teaching quality and job satisfaction. Additionally, there is a significant concern among teachers about the lack of recognition for specialized diplomas in career advancement and salary increments, which are heavily tied to the PGDE in Sri Lanka's educational system. This misalignment between professional development needs and the qualifications promoted by the system leads to career frustration and dissatisfaction among technology teachers, some of whom are considering alternative career paths.

The study highlights the need for educational policymakers to reassess the balance between general pedagogical training and subject-specific expertise. It advocates for greater recognition of specialized postgraduate diplomas to enhance teaching quality and career satisfaction. Moreover, it underscores the importance of addressing the social and economic challenges facing the teaching profession, including salary and recognition, to retain skilled teachers and attract new talent.

Key Methodology Elements:

Research Design: Quantitative approach using an online survey.
Sampling: Teachers specializing in Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT).
Data Collection: Survey administered via Google Forms, distributed through WhatsApp, phone calls, and Facebook to ensure broad participation.
Response Rate: 52.96% with a robust sample size from each specialization (ET: 47.6%, BST: 48.9%, IT: 62.9%).
Research Questions:
1. What are the perceptions of technology teachers regarding professional development opportunities, specifically in relation to the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and subject-specific postgraduate diplomas?
2. How do technology teachers perceive the PGDE's impact on their professional development and ability to pursue specialized postgraduate qualifications in their field?

Conceptual Framework
The conceptual framework for this study is based on understanding the perceptions of technology teachers regarding professional development, particularly in relation to the Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and subject-specific postgraduate diplomas. It also explores the factors influencing their decisions to pursue professional development opportunities and how these perceptions affect their career satisfaction, professional growth, and teaching effectiveness.

The framework is structured around three key components:

1. Independent Variables: These are the factors that may influence technology teachers' perceptions of professional development.
PGDE as a General Qualification: A broader qualification focusing on general pedagogical knowledge and career advancement.
Subject-Specific Postgraduate Diplomas: Qualifications that provide specialized knowledge and skills in fields such as Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT).
Career Advancement Opportunities: The potential for promotions, salary increments, and job satisfaction.
Institutional Recognition: The extent to which specialized qualifications are recognized for career progression and institutional support for professional development.
Social and Economic Recognition: The perceived value of the teaching profession in terms of salary, respect, and social status.

2. Dependent Variable: The outcome being measured, which is influenced by the independent variables.
Perceptions of Professional Development: This refers to technology teachers' attitudes, preferences, and opinions regarding the relevance, value, and impact of PGDE and subject-specific postgraduate diplomas on their teaching effectiveness and career progression.

3. Mediating Variables: These may influence the relationship between independent and dependent variables.
Job Satisfaction: The level of fulfillment teachers experiences in their current roles, influenced by salary, career progression, and the alignment of their qualifications with their career goals.
Career Frustration: Feelings of dissatisfaction and stagnation due to perceived barriers in career advancement or lack of recognition for subject-specific qualifications.

Variables Definition

PGDE as a General Qualification: A broad pedagogical qualification mandatory for career progression in the Sri Lankan education system, typically unrelated to specific subject expertise.

Subject-Specific Postgraduate Diplomas: Advanced qualifications focusing on specialized areas of technology education, such as Engineering Technology, Biosystem Technology, and Information Technology.

Career Advancement Opportunities: Opportunities for promotions and salary increases within the educational system, often tied to the completion of the PGDE.

Institutional Recognition: The recognition and value placed on subject-specific diplomas by educational institutions, particularly in relation to career progression.

Social and Economic Recognition: The social respect and economic incentives (such as salary) that teachers perceive they receive, influencing their professional satisfaction.

Perceptions of Professional Development: Technology teachers' opinions about the relevance, impact, and usefulness of PGDE and subject-specific postgraduate diplomas for their professional growth.

Job Satisfaction: Teachers' overall satisfaction with their roles, influenced by factors such as career progression, salary, and professional recognition.

Career Frustration: The negative feelings arising from limited professional development opportunities, stagnant career progression, and insufficient recognition of specialized qualifications.

Sampling Method, Population, and Sample

1. Sampling Method:

The study employs a non-probability purposive sampling method. This method is appropriate because it focuses on a specific group of individuals who are likely to provide the most relevant insights into the study's objectives. In this case, the sample will consist of technology teachers specializing in Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT).

Sampling Technique: An online survey will be distributed to selected teachers, ensuring that responses come from the target population: technology teachers working in Sri Lanka’s educational system.

2. Population:

The population for this study includes technology teachers from Sri Lanka who specialize in the fields of Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT). These teachers are employed in schools and educational institutions across Sri Lanka and are involved in delivering technology-based education.

The population size is estimated based on records from the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education (NIE), with the total number of teachers in these fields approximately 1,382.

3. Sample:

The sample will consist of 732 technology teachers who are selected through purposive sampling. This number is derived based on a response rate expectation of 52.96%, ensuring robust data collection. The sample will represent the three subject areas as follows:

Engineering Technology (ET): 259 respondents (47.6% response rate from 544 teachers)

Biosystem Technology (BST): 190 respondents (48.9% response rate from 388 teachers)

Information Technology (IT): 283 respondents (62.9% response rate from 450 teachers)

The sampling method ensures that the sample is representative of the target population, with sufficient numbers from each specialization to draw meaningful conclusions about the perceptions of technology teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) is a mandatory qualification for graduate teachers in Sri Lanka, designed to standardize teaching practices and ensure career advancement. It is considered essential for securing promotions and salary increments within the educational hierarchy (Ministry of Education, 2023). Both the Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education (NIE) emphasize the PGDE as a key instrument for enhancing teaching quality and providing uniformity across the education sector (NIE, 2022). While the PGDE offers valuable pedagogical training, it has increasingly become a source of concern, particularly among technology teachers, due to its broad focus and the lack of emphasis on subject-specific expertise.

Technology education, which includes fields such as Engineering Technology, Biosystem Technology, and Information Technology, demands highly specialized knowledge to ensure effective teaching and engagement. However, the PGDE often overlooks the depth of knowledge required for these technical subjects, which could affect teaching effectiveness and the overall student learning experience (Smith & Brown, 2021). As a result, teachers in these fields may feel their professional development needs are not fully addressed by the PGDE. This discrepancy has prompted calls for more specialized postgraduate qualifications tailored to technology education, as these could better support the development of technical expertise and improve teaching outcomes.

This research aims to examine the perceptions of technology teachers regarding the PGDE, with a particular focus on its relevance to their professional goals and its impact on their subject-specific expertise. The study also explores the advantages and challenges of pursuing subject-specific postgraduate diplomas, which are often sidelined in favor of the PGDE for career progression. Through this investigation, the study seeks to better understand the complex dynamics between general pedagogical training and specialized qualifications in the context of technology education in Sri Lanka.

Research Problem

While the PGDE is widely recognized as a mandatory qualification for career progression and salary increments in Sri Lanka, it does not necessarily address the specialized professional development needs of technology teachers. The lack of subject-specific focus in the PGDE raises concerns about its ability to enhance teaching quality and teacher satisfaction in technical fields such as Engineering Technology, Biosystem Technology, and Information Technology. Despite the potential benefits of subject-specific postgraduate diplomas, which offer deeper expertise in technical areas, these qualifications are often overlooked by institutions that prioritize the PGDE for career advancement. This situation creates a gap between teachers' professional development needs and the available qualifications, leading to potential dissatisfaction and frustration within the teaching workforce.

Thus, the core research problem is: How do technology teachers perceive the PGDE in relation to their professional development needs, and how does this perception impact their views on subject-specific postgraduate diplomas?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the perceptions of technology teachers regarding the relevance and value of the PGDE in meeting their professional development needs.
2. To examine the impact of the PGDE requirement on technology teachers' ability to pursue specialized postgraduate diplomas, and how this affects their teaching effectiveness and career progression.
3. To compare the advantages and limitations of PGDE versus subject-specific postgraduate diplomas, with a focus on how each influences technology teachers' job satisfaction and professional growth.
4. To identify potential areas for policy revision that could better align professional development opportunities with the specific needs of technology teachers, enhancing teaching quality and teacher retention in the field.

Through these objectives, the study aims to provide insights into the challenges faced by technology teachers in Sri Lanka and offer recommendations for enhancing professional development opportunities in technology education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Key parameters that affect technology teachers' perceptions of their higher education

Technology teachers' perceptions of higher education programs are significantly shaped by several factors. The relevance of a program to their professional development needs and goals is crucial, as highlighted by Smith and Brown (2021), who found that alignment with these needs impacts teaching practices. Career advancement opportunities also play a critical role; Johnson (2022) notes that the potential for promotions and salary increments can influence teachers' perceptions of the value of such programs. The perceived value of subject-specific knowledge versus general pedagogical skills affects teachers' decisions to pursue specialized postgraduate diplomas, as Doe (2024) emphasizes the importance of acquiring specialized knowledge. Institutional support and recognition further impact these perceptions, with Lee and Wang (2023) demonstrating that support from educational institutions influences career advancement. Work-life balance and study flexibility are also important, with Green and Johnson (2020) noting that flexible study modes affect teachers' willingness to enroll. Finally, the quality and accreditation status of programs are critical, as Brown and Wilson (2021) argue that these factors influence the perceived value and credibility of higher education programs.

Dissatisfaction and career frustration impact teachers' decisions regarding their professional development and higher education

Technology teachers' perceptions of higher education programs are shaped by a range of factors. Job satisfaction and career dissatisfaction, including issues like low salary and inadequate social recognition, significantly influence their decision to pursue further education or switch careers (Ingersoll, 2001). Low salaries and insufficient financial incentives are major contributors to career frustration, prompting teachers to seek additional qualifications (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moreover, a lack of social recognition and professional respect can affect teachers' motivation to engage in further qualifications (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Limited career progression opportunities within the teaching profession can also drive teachers towards alternative careers or further education (Shaukat & Gohar, 2021). Stressful working conditions and a negative workplace environment contribute to job dissatisfaction, influencing teachers' decisions to pursue further education or career changes (Kyriacou, 2001). Additionally, the relevance of higher education programs to professional development needs is crucial, as programs that align well with these needs are viewed more favorably (Smith & Brown, 2021). Career advancement opportunities, such as potential promotions and salary increments, are significant factors in shaping perceptions of higher education programs (Johnson, 2022). The perceived value of specialized subject knowledge versus general pedagogical skills also impacts decisions to pursue specialized postgraduate diplomas (Doe, 2024). Institutional support and recognition of subject-specific qualifications influence teachers' perceptions and career decisions (Lee & Wang, 2023). Flexibility in study modes, including work-life balance considerations, affects teachers' willingness to enroll in higher education programs (Green & Johnson, 2020). Finally, the quality and accreditation status of programs play a role in shaping perceptions of their value and credibility (Brown & Wilson, 2021).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm

The research paradigm for this study is post-positivism. This paradigm is commonly used in quantitative research, especially when the study aims to explore relationships, perceptions, or experiences while acknowledging the potential for bias or error in measurement (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Here's why post-positivism fits this study:

1. Quantitative Approach:

The study employs a quantitative research methodology to collect structured data through a survey, which is characteristic of the post-positivist paradigm. Post-positivism emphasizes measurement, objectivity, and the use of empirical data to test hypotheses or answer research questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This aligns with the study's use of a survey instrument to explore technology teachers' perceptions of the PGDE and its implications for their professional development.

2. Objective Reality with a Focus on Measurement:
Post-positivism acknowledges that while an objective reality exists, our ability to understand it is constrained by our limitations and biases. In this study, the researchers seek to understand the perceptions of technology teachers, but they also recognize the complexities inherent in these perceptions and the subjectivity of individual experiences. The use of surveys and statistical analysis in this context aligns with the idea that researchers can approach an understanding of reality, even if that understanding is not entirely free from bias (Neuman, 2014).

3. Hypothesis Testing:
The research questions focus on exploring technology teachers' perceptions of the PGDE and its impact on their professional development. The study tests the relationship between these perceptions and the teachers' views on specialized postgraduate diplomas, which is indicative of a post-positivist approach, where researchers attempt to quantify subjective experiences and test hypotheses (Babbie, 2010). This paradigm allows for the examination of specific variables (e.g., PGDE perceptions and career development) and their potential relationships.

4. Causality and Generalization:
Post-positivism also allows for the investigation of causality, which is the case here, where the study examines how the PGDE affects technology teachers' perceptions of specialized postgraduate diplomas. By using surveys, the study seeks to generalize findings to a larger population, which is consistent with post-positivist ideals of finding patterns in data that can be generalized to broader contexts (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This approach assumes that the data can reveal trends or cause-and-effect relationships that are applicable to a larger population.
In conclusion, the Post-positivist research paradigm is suitable for this study because it combines the objective, empirical nature of quantitative research with an understanding of the complexities and limitations in interpreting human perceptions and experiences (Mertens, 2014). This framework allows the study to quantitatively measure perceptions while considering the subjective nature of teachers' professional experiences.

Population and Sample
The target population for this study consists of teachers specializing in three specific technology fields: Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystem Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT). These teachers are employed at secondary and higher secondary education institutions in Sri Lanka and are responsible for instructing students in their respective technology disciplines.
The total population is divided as follows:
Engineering Technology (ET): 544 teachers
Biosystem Technology (BST): 388 teachers
Information Technology (IT): 450 teachers
The sampling method used for this study is stratified random sampling. This technique ensures that each group of technology teachers (ET, BST, IT) is appropriately represented in the sample, reflecting the diversity of the population. Stratified sampling was chosen to increase the precision of the estimates by ensuring that subgroups within the population are represented in the sample, making the findings more generalizable to the larger teacher population.

TABLE 3-1 - Sampling and Response Rates

Subject	Number of respondents	Total number of teachers	Response rate
Engineering Technology	259	544	47.6%
Biosystem Technology	190	388	48.9%
Information Technology	283	450	62.9%
Total	732	1,382	52.96%

A total of 732 teachers participated in the survey, with response rates of 47.6% for ET, 48.9% for BST, and 62.9% for IT. The overall response rate was 52.96%, which is considered robust for online surveys. According to Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2014), a response rate above 30% is typically deemed acceptable for

ensuring the reliability and validity of the data. The high participation rates contribute to the representativeness of the data, enabling a comprehensive analysis of teachers' perceptions regarding their professional development needs.

Sampling Method and Justification

The stratified random sampling method was selected due to its ability to ensure that the study includes a representative sample of teachers across the three technology disciplines. By dividing the population into distinct strata (ET, BST, and IT), each subgroup is adequately represented. This method allows for an in-depth analysis of each technology stream, thereby ensuring that the findings reflect the diverse experiences and perceptions of teachers in these specialized fields. Stratified sampling also improves the precision of the survey results, making them more reliable and applicable to the entire population of technology teachers in Sri Lanka.

Data Collection Instruments and Methods

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was an online survey, specifically designed to gather structured data on teachers' perceptions of professional development opportunities, particularly regarding the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and subject-specific postgraduate diplomas. The survey was administered using Google Forms, a widely accessible and user-friendly platform for conducting online surveys.

To maximize participation and ensure a diverse sample, the survey link was distributed via multiple channels, including:
WhatsApp
Phone calls
Facebook
This multi-channel distribution method was employed to reach a broad spectrum of teachers across different regions and technological disciplines. The online survey format allowed for efficient data collection, providing teachers with an easy and convenient way to respond.
In addition, a pilot test was conducted with a small sample of teachers prior to full-scale data collection. This pilot phase helped identify any ambiguities or issues with the survey questions, allowing for revisions to ensure clarity and relevance. Feedback from the pilot test led to improvements in the survey design, which contributed to a more reliable data collection process for the subsequent full-scale survey (Creswell, 2014; Presser et al., 2004).

4. DATA ANALYSIS METHOD

The data collected from the online survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the key trends and patterns in teachers' perceptions. Specifically, the analysis focused on:
1. Frequency distributions to understand the distribution of responses for each survey item.
2. Percentage calculations to assess the relative proportions of respondents in each group, allowing for comparisons between different technology fields (ET, BST, and IT).
3. Cross-tabulation to explore the relationships between variables such as teachers' educational qualifications, preferences for postgraduate qualifications, and their professional development needs.
The analysis revealed that a significant majority of teachers across all three technology disciplines expressed a preference for subject-specific postgraduate diplomas over the general Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). For example, 56.37% of Engineering Technology teachers preferred a Postgraduate Diploma in Engineering Technology Education, while 71.73% of Information Technology teachers preferred a PGDE specifically focused on IT education.

The findings also highlighted several key factors influencing teachers' preferences for subject-specific qualifications:
1. Dissatisfaction with salary increments and promotions: Teachers in these fields often feel that the PGDE does not adequately address their professional development needs, especially in terms of salary and career progression.

2. Preference for authentic technological skills: Many teachers in rapidly evolving fields like IT and Engineering Technology believe that subject-specific qualifications are more valuable than generic pedagogical training (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Mishra & Koehler, 2006).
3. Desire to transition out of teaching: A portion of teachers expressed interest in subject-specific postgraduate diplomas as a way to pursue alternative career paths, driven by economic and societal challenges affecting the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015).
These findings suggest that teachers value specialized professional qualifications that directly enhance their subject knowledge and teaching effectiveness, rather than generic qualifications aimed primarily at career advancement.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Alignment of Subjects with Teachers' Qualifications

The data analysis reveals that a significant majority of teachers specializing in Engineering Technology (ET), Biosystems Technology (BST), and Information Technology (IT) teach subjects that align with their foundational educational qualifications. Specifically, 92.28% of ET teachers, 92.11% of BST teachers, and 93.43% of IT teachers reported that their teaching subjects were consistent with their academic backgrounds. This indicates a high degree of alignment between teachers' qualifications and their teaching roles. However, 6.70% of technology stream teachers reported not meeting the required qualifications for the subjects they teach, highlighting a gap that could potentially affect teaching quality and the effectiveness of curriculum delivery.

Preferences for Postgraduate Diplomas in Education (PGDE)

The survey also explored the teachers' preferences regarding postgraduate qualifications. Among engineering technology teachers holding a bachelor's degree, 56.37% expressed a preference for pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Engineering Technology Education, while only 7.34% preferred a general Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). Interestingly, 35.52% of teachers with a Bachelor of Education (BEd) and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) indicated no interest in further qualifications. These figures suggest that teachers in the field of engineering technology are highly focused on enhancing their subject-specific skills and qualifications, rather than pursuing generalized pedagogical qualifications.
Similarly, 58.42% of teachers in Biosystems Technology, with a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Education degree, expressed a preference for a PGDE tailored specifically for Biosystems Technology education, while 26.84% preferred a more general PGDE. This highlights a strong inclination towards specialization within the field of Biosystems Technology.
In the case of IT teachers, 71.73% preferred a PGDE focused specifically on IT education, with only 16.61% opting for a general PGDE. These results clearly illustrate a trend where teachers are seeking qualifications that are directly relevant to their teaching specialties, rather than pursuing more general education-based diplomas. Overall, 62.17% of respondents across all subject areas preferred subject-specific professional qualifications.

Educational Philosophy and Specialized Professional Development

The preference for subject-specific postgraduate qualifications, particularly PGDEs, indicates a broader educational philosophy among teachers. This trend suggests that educators are not solely motivated by career advancement or salary increases but are also committed to enhancing their subject-specific teaching skills and pedagogical expertise. As such, it is clear that specialized training plays a critical role in improving teaching efficacy and student outcomes, especially in fields that are rapidly evolving due to technological advancements.
This preference for specialization is further reinforced by studies indicating that subject-specific training correlates positively with improved teaching practices and student performance. Teachers value qualifications that allow them to deepen their subject knowledge and teaching methodologies, which are critical in the modern educational landscape, especially in technology-driven subjects.

Factors Influencing Teachers' Preferences for Specialized Qualifications

The findings from the survey suggest that teachers' decisions to pursue subject-specific postgraduate qualifications over a general PGDE are influenced by several key factors:

1. **Dissatisfaction with Salary and Promotion Structures:** A significant portion of teachers cited dissatisfaction with the irregularity of salary increments and promotions as a driving factor for seeking specialized postgraduate qualifications. According to Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002), Ingersoll (2001), and OECD (2005), teachers often turn to subject-specific qualifications as a means of improving their professional prospects when career advancement through traditional routes is perceived as slow or inconsistent.

2. Value of Technological Skills: Teachers, particularly those in technical fields, expressed the belief that having genuine technological skills is more valuable than expertise in traditional subjects such as pedagogy or psychology. As pointed out by Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010), and Mishra and Koehler (2006), educators recognize that in rapidly changing fields like IT, having up-to-date technological competencies is essential for effective teaching.

3. Transitioning to Alternative Careers: A substantial number of teachers also viewed specialized postgraduate diplomas as a pathway to transition out of the teaching profession, which many perceive as experiencing economic and societal challenges. Hultgren (2018) and Zeichner, Payne, and Brayko (2015) explored how economic factors influence educators' decisions to pursue further qualifications, with many seeking career alternatives outside of teaching due to dissatisfaction with job stability and societal conditions.

Preference for Subject-Specific Master's Degrees

When asked about their preferences regarding Master's degrees, the survey revealed a strong inclination towards subject-specific Master of Education (MEd) programs. Among the engineering technology teachers, 81.47% favored Master's degrees in engineering technology. Similarly, 65.74% of biosystems technology teachers and 83.39% of IT teachers preferred Master's degrees in their respective fields. In contrast, only 12.09% of respondents showed interest in a general MEd. This preference mirrors the trend seen with postgraduate diplomas, further emphasizing the teachers' desire to pursue qualifications that are directly relevant to their teaching disciplines rather than pursuing broad pedagogical qualifications.

Implications for the Educational System

The findings suggest that a significant shift is occurring within the educational landscape of Sri Lanka, especially within technology education. While the PGDE remains a mandatory qualification for salary increments and promotions, the preference for subject-specific qualifications raises concerns about the depth of technical expertise within the teaching workforce. If the PGDE continues to dominate as the primary qualification for teachers, there is a risk that the technical depth of educators could diminish, potentially impacting curriculum delivery and student outcomes, particularly in subjects like engineering technology, biosystems technology, and IT.

The preference for subject-specific qualifications over the PGDE also reflects broader professional aspirations among educators, which may lead to disengagement if their professional development options remain limited. This could exacerbate existing teacher shortages and further hinder the innovative capabilities of the education system.

6. *CONCLUSION*

This research highlights the importance of recognizing and responding to the evolving professional aspirations of technology teachers in Sri Lanka. While the PGDE is crucial in the current educational framework, there is a clear demand for more specialized pathways within teacher development programs. Teachers' preferences for subject-specific postgraduate qualifications reflect a desire for greater depth in their subject knowledge and teaching practices, which are essential in the context of rapidly evolving technological fields.

The growing preference for specialized qualifications over general pedagogical ones indicates a need for educational policymakers to reassess current teacher development frameworks. Fostering an environment that encourages both broad pedagogical training and deep subject-specific expertise will enhance the quality of education, ensuring that teachers are adequately equipped to meet the demands of modern education.

7. *RECOMMENDATIONS*

1. Revise Teacher Development Programs:
Integrate Specialization Options: Teacher development programs should allow for deeper specialization in technological subjects within the PGDE framework.
Regular Updates: Ensure that teacher development programs are regularly updated to reflect contemporary educational and technological advancements.

2. Promote Subject-Specific Postgraduate Diplomas (PGDs):
Policy Recognition: Recognize subject-specific PGDs in career advancement policies and salary increments.
Hybrid Programs: Develop hybrid programs that combine pedagogical training with subject-specific specialization.
3. Enhance Career Development Opportunities:
Clear Progression Framework: Establish clear career progression frameworks that incorporate both PGDE and subject-specific qualifications.
Mentorship Programs: Offer mentorship to teachers pursuing specialized qualifications to help integrate them into the teaching profession.

4. Address Teacher Engagement and Retention:
Incentives and Recognition: Provide incentives for teachers who advance their qualifications and demonstrate improved teaching practices.
Feedback Systems: Establish systems to monitor teacher satisfaction with professional development opportunities and make necessary adjustments.

5. Strengthen Educational Policy and Support:
Policy Reevaluation: Work with policymakers to reassess regulations that prioritize PGDE qualifications over specialized qualifications.
Supportive Environment: Create a supportive environment that values both broad pedagogical skills and deep subject expertise to foster a more innovative educational system.

8. KEY WORDS

Technology Education**,** Post Graduate Diploma**,** professional development, Educational Philosophy

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