# ASSESSING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS: A STUDY ON HEAD TEACHERS' COMPETENCIES FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT IN NIGER STATE

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## ABSTRACT

This research addresses the growing need for effective leadership in basic schools in Niger State, where head teachers play a pivotal role in influencing educational outcomes. The study identifies essential professional development skills for head teachers to enhance their management capabilities. Utilising a descriptive survey design based on Borich's needs assessment model, data were collected from 1,113 head teachers and 28 educational lecturers through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The research findings revealed that competencies in staff personnel management and curriculum implementation were critically important, with mean ratings indicating they were "Highly Needed." Specific gaps were identified in areas such as designing professional development activities and fostering innovative instructional practices among staff. The findings underscore the urgent need for targeted professional development programs tailored to the specific requirements of head teachers. The study concludes that equipping head teachers with relevant skills through continuous professional development is vital for fostering effective school management and improving student performance. By offering empirical insights into the professional development needs of head teachers in Niger State, this research informs policymakers and educational institutions about critical areas for investment in training initiatives, ultimately aiming to enhance educational leadership and the overall quality of education in the region.
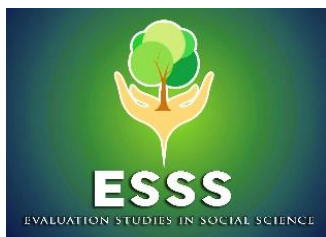
## INTRODUCTION

Effective education leadership is pivotal for shaping school teaching and learning quality. Headteachers or school principals are especially critical as they are the primary leaders

responsible for managing educational institutions and fostering a positive learning environment. This research focuses on the professional development skills required by head teachers in Niger State, Nigeria, highlighting the pressing need for targeted training to enhance their leadership capabilities. Headteacher leadership plays a fundamental role in determining the success of schools and the educational outcomes of students (Adu, 2016). Headteachers are instrumental in establishing and maintaining a positive school culture and climate. Their leadership style sets the tone for the school environment, influencing teacher morale, student engagement, and community involvement. Research shows that a supportive and inclusive school climate, fostered by effective leadership, improves student performance and well-being (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). Effective head teachers are catalysts for educational improvement. They are responsible for implementing policies, managing resources, and guiding teachers in adopting innovative teaching practices. Studies indicate that strong leadership practices correlate with higher student achievement, as head teachers prioritising instructional leadership can significantly impact classroom practices (Bellibaş et al., 2021). Headteachers play a crucial role in the professional development of their staff. By identifying teachers' strengths and areas for improvement, they can facilitate targeted training and support. Research has shown that schools with strong leadership tend to have higher teacher satisfaction and retention levels, which benefits student learning (Frahm & Cianca, 2021).

Effectively managing school resources—including finances, materials, and human capital—largely depends on the head teacher's leadership. Effective leaders are adept at making strategic decisions that enhance resource allocation and utilization, which is essential for optimizing school performance (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). Poor resource management can lead to significant barriers to educational quality, making strong leadership necessary for overcoming these challenges (Nasution & Kieser, 2024). Headteachers serve as the primary liaison between the school and the community. Their ability to build strong relationships with parents, community members, and local organizations is vital for fostering support for the school's initiatives. Engaged communities contribute to the overall success of schools, as they can provide additional resources, support, and advocacy for educational programs (Stanley & Gilzene, 2023). The academic landscape constantly evolves, with new policies, curricula, and challenges emerging regularly. Effective head teachers are skilled in navigating these changes and leading their schools through transitions. Their ability to respond to challenges, such as those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, is critical for maintaining educational continuity and ensuring that students continue to receive quality education (Dayagbil et al., 2021).

Building strong relationships with parents and the broader community is essential for head teachers. They are responsible for fostering community involvement in school activities, encouraging parental engagement, and collaborating with local organizations. This engagement is vital for promoting the school's initiatives and meeting the community's educational needs. In the 9-3-4 system, head teachers must advocate for the importance of education and garner support for school programs. Headteachers are charged with the administrative responsibilities of running the school, which include budgeting, financial management, and resource allocation. They must ensure that the school operates efficiently and that funds are used effectively to support educational programs. Effective head teachers

are responsible for monitoring the overall performance of their schools and evaluating educational outcomes. This involves collecting data on student achievement, analyzing trends, and making informed decisions based on evidence. They must also report on school performance to relevant authorities, ensuring accountability within the 9-3-4 system. This monitoring is critical for identifying areas for improvement and implementing necessary interventions. In an evolving educational landscape, head teachers are expected to promote innovation and continuous improvement within their schools. This includes embracing new teaching methodologies, integrating technology into the classroom, and exploring partnerships that enhance educational opportunities. Headteachers can help their schools thrive within the 9-3-4 framework by fostering an environment that values creativity and adaptability.

To effectively fulfil their roles, they must engage in continuous professional growth to acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for successful leadership. The 9-3-4 system introduces significant changes to the curriculum, including new subjects, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. Headteachers must be well-versed in these changes to guide their staff effectively and ensure that the curriculum is implemented successfully. Professional development programs tailored to the new curriculum can equip head teachers with the necessary knowledge to support teachers in adapting their instructional practices. Effective leadership is crucial for creating a positive school environment and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Professional development helps head teachers refine their leadership skills, including communication, conflict resolution, and decision-making. Research indicates strong leadership correlates with improved student outcomes and teacher effectiveness (Mulyani et al., 2020). Ongoing training can empower head teachers to lead more effectively and inspire their staff. Headteachers are responsible for the professional growth of their teaching staff. Headteachers must engage in professional development to support their teachers effectively. This training can help them understand how to conduct effective evaluations, identify areas for improvement, and facilitate professional learning opportunities for their teachers. As role models, head teachers who prioritize their development set a precedent for lifelong learning within their schools.

The educational landscape is fraught with challenges, including resource constraints, diverse student needs, and external pressures. Professional development equips head teachers with strategies to address these challenges effectively. Training in inclusive education, data-driven decision-making, and crisis management can enhance their ability to respond to the unique needs of their schools and communities. Engaging parents and the community is essential for the success of schools. Professional development can provide head teachers with the tools to build strong partnerships with stakeholders, fostering a collaborative approach to education. Training in community engagement strategies can help head teachers understand how to involve parents and local organizations in school initiatives, enhancing support for educational programs. Innovation is vital for school improvement in today's rapidly changing educational environment. Professional development can expose head teachers to new technologies, teaching methodologies, and best practices from other educational contexts. By fostering a culture of innovation, head teachers can encourage their staff to explore creative approaches to teaching and learning, ultimately benefiting students. As educational leaders,

head teachers must ensure that their schools comply with national educational standards and policies. Professional development programs can provide essential training on legal and ethical responsibilities, data reporting, and accountability measures. This knowledge is critical for maintaining transparency and ensuring that schools meet the expectations set forth by educational authorities.

The effective management of basic schools in Niger State, Nigeria, is critically hindered by the inadequate professional development skills of head teachers. This deficiency poses significant challenges to the educational system, impacting school effectiveness and student outcomes. Despite recognising the principal's role in fostering a conducive learning environment, many head teachers lack the necessary training and skills to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The selection of head teachers in Nigeria often prioritises teaching experience over leadership qualities, resulting in leaders who are not adequately prepared for administrative roles. This situation is exacerbated by the absence of formal leadership training programs, which are essential for developing the necessary competencies in school management (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). Research indicates that only about 14% of the variation in school effectiveness can be attributed to leadership practices (Pietsch & Tulowitzki, 2017). This statistic highlights a significant gap in the skills required for effective school management, suggesting that many head teachers are not equipped to drive improvements in educational outcomes. Studies have shown that principals in Nigeria often fail to supervise teachers effectively, which is crucial for enhancing school performance and student achievement (Usman, 2015). The lack of professional development opportunities further compounds this issue, as head teachers lack adequate training to support their staff. The deficiencies in head teacher skills directly correlate with low educational achievement levels in Niger State. The inability of head teachers to implement effective management practices contributes to poor student performance, a pressing concern for the educational system (Day et al., 2016). This study highlights the essential skills required for effective school management, enhancing the potential for better academic performance, increased student engagement, and improved educational quality. This study offers critical perspectives for decision-makers in Niger State and beyond. This study serves as a valuable resource by clarifying head teachers' distinct professional development needs, thereby aiding in creating focused training programs and educational policies. This study enhances the existing academic literature by offering empirical insights into the professional development requirements of head teachers within a particular context.

### Research Questions

1. What professional development skills are perceived as essential by head teachers for effective management of basic schools in Niger State?
2. What current gaps exist in the professional development competencies of head teachers about their management roles?
3. What targeted professional development programs can be implemented to address the identified needs of head teachers in Niger State?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Professional Development in Education*

Professional development in education is a vital component in enhancing the effectiveness of educators and school leaders (Kilag & Sasan, 2023). It encompasses activities designed to improve knowledge, skills, and competencies for effective teaching and management in educational settings. Professional development is often grounded in several theoretical frameworks that guide its implementation and evaluation. One prominent framework is Andragogy, which focuses on adult learning principles. According to Boyer et al. (2014), adult learners are self-directed, draw on their life experiences, and are motivated by practical applications of their learning. This framework suggests that professional development programs should be tailored to educators' specific needs and contexts, allowing for more meaningful and applicable learning experiences. Another relevant theory is the Transformative Learning Theory, proposed by Mezirow. This theory posits that adult learning involves critical reflection, leading to a transformation in perspectives and behaviours (Mezirow, 2018). In the context of professional development, educators should engage in reflective practices that challenge their assumptions and enable them to adopt new strategies and approaches in their teaching and leadership. Various models have been proposed to structure professional development initiatives. The Continuum of Professional Development model suggests a progressive approach, beginning with initial training and extending to ongoing support and mentoring (Neimeyer et al., 2012). This model emphasizes the importance of continuous learning, where professional development is not a one-time event but an ongoing process that evolves with the educator's career.

The Collaborative Professional Development model highlights the value of peer learning and cooperation among educators. According to Meng (2023), collaborative learning environments foster shared knowledge, support, and accountability, ultimately leading to improved teaching practices. This model encourages educators to work together, share experiences, and reflect on their practices, which can enhance their professional growth. Research consistently demonstrates that effective professional development positively impacts teaching practices and student outcomes. For instance, Fairman et al. (2022) found that professional development focused on active learning, sustained over time and aligned with educators' needs significantly improved instructional practices. Furthermore, professional development can enhance teachers' confidence and motivation, increasing job satisfaction and retention (Abu-Tineh et al., 2023). In school leadership, professional development is crucial for head teachers and administrators. Effective school leadership is linked to improved school climate, teacher morale, and student achievement (Brown, 2022). Professional development programs tailored for school leaders can equip them with the skills to navigate challenges, implement change, and foster a culture of continuous improvement within their schools.

Despite its importance, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of professional development programs. One major challenge is the lack of alignment between professional development offerings and the actual needs of educators. Research suggests that many programs do not adequately consider teachers' specific contexts and challenges, leading

to a disconnect between training and practice (Fairman et al., 2022). Additionally, limited resources, including time and funding, often impede the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. Educators struggle to find time for professional development amidst their teaching responsibilities, and without sufficient financial support, schools may be unable to provide high-quality training opportunities (Schwartz et al., 2019). Several best practices have been identified in the literature to enhance the effectiveness of professional development. These include:

1. **Needs Assessment**: Conducting thorough assessments to identify educators' specific professional development needs can ensure that programs are relevant and targeted.
2. **Active Learning**: Engaging educators in hands-on, participatory learning experiences fosters a more profound understanding and application of new skills and knowledge.
3. **Collaboration**: Encouraging collaboration among educators can promote shared learning and support the implementation of new practices in the classroom.
4. **Sustained Support**: Providing ongoing support and follow-up after initial training helps educators to reinforce and apply what they have learned.
5. **Evaluation and Feedback**: Regularly evaluating professional development programs and incorporating participant feedback can lead to continuous improvement and adaptation to changing needs.

### *Skills Needed by Head Teachers*

Headteachers (or school principals) are pivotal in shaping the educational environment and influencing teacher performance and student outcomes. As educational leaders, head teachers are tasked with a range of responsibilities that require a diverse set of skills. The key competencies and skills needed for effective school leadership emphasise the importance of these skills in fostering a positive learning environment and improving school performance. Effective leadership is at the core of successful school management. According to Andriani et al. (2018), head teachers must exhibit transformational leadership qualities that inspire and motivate staff. This includes creating a shared vision, fostering collaboration, and encouraging professional growth among teachers. Transformational leadership has been linked to improved teacher morale and student achievement, highlighting the critical nature of this skill. Additionally, instructional leadership is a vital component of effective school management. Qian and Walker (2013) found that head teachers who actively participate in curriculum development, support teaching practices, and provide teacher feedback significantly enhance student learning outcomes. Instructional leaders focus on improving teaching and learning processes, making it essential for head teachers to possess strong pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Interpersonal skills are critical for head teachers, as they must interact effectively with various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents and the community (Owan et al., 2025). Effective communication is fundamental for building relationships and fostering a positive school culture. According to Merritt (2021), head teachers should be adept at verbal and non-verbal communication, actively listening to concerns, and facilitating open dialogue

among all stakeholders. Moreover, conflict resolution skills are increasingly necessary in the school setting. Kiumi (2017) indicates that head teachers often face conflicts involving staff, students, and parents. Navigating these conflicts effectively maintains a harmonious school environment and contributes to the community's well-being. Headteachers are responsible for many administrative tasks, from budgeting and resource allocation to staff management and compliance with educational policies. Practical organisational skills are essential for managing these responsibilities efficiently. According to Usman (2016), head teachers must be able to prioritise tasks, delegate responsibilities, and utilise resources effectively to ensure smooth school operations. Additionally, data analysis skills are becoming increasingly important in educational leadership. With the rise of data-driven decision-making in schools, head teachers must be capable of analysing student performance data, identifying trends, and implementing strategies for improvement (Hora et al., 2017). This analytical approach enables head teachers to make informed decisions that positively impact student learning outcomes.

Given the rapidly changing educational landscape, head teachers must engage in continuous professional development to keep their skills current. Nooruddin and Bhamani (2019) suggest that effective head teachers view professional development as a lifelong endeavour, seeking opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills throughout their careers. This commitment to lifelong learning benefits the head teachers and sets a positive example for their staff, fostering a culture of continuous improvement within the school. Headteachers must develop cultural competence in increasingly diverse educational settings to effectively lead their schools. According to Hollowell (2019), culturally responsive leadership involves understanding and addressing the diverse needs of students and families. Headteachers who embrace inclusivity and respect for diversity create a welcoming environment that promotes equity and ensures all students feel valued and supported.

### *Importance of Continuous Professional Development*

Continuous professional development (CPD) is a lifelong education and training process that enhances educators' and school leaders' knowledge, skills, and competencies (Nooruddin & Bhamani, 2019). In the context of education, CPD is critical for ensuring that teachers and head teachers remain effective and responsive to the evolving demands of their profession. The significance of CPD, its impact on educational outcomes, and the challenges and best practices associated with its implementation (Sargeant et al., 2018). One of the primary reasons for the importance of CPD is its direct impact on teaching quality. Ventista and Brown (2023) highlight that effective CPD programs improve instructional practices and student learning outcomes. By engaging in professional development, educators acquire new pedagogical strategies, learn to implement innovative teaching methods, and stay abreast of the latest educational research. This ongoing learning process enhances their effectiveness in the classroom and fosters a culture of continuous improvement within the school. The ultimate goal of CPD is to improve student outcomes. Studies have shown that schools with a strong commitment to professional development for their staff experience higher levels of student achievement (Althauser, 2015; Whitworth & Chiu, 2015). According to Hasha and Wadesango (2020), effective CPD that aligns with school goals and improves teaching practices can
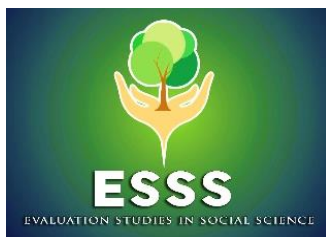
significantly improve student performance. This relationship underscores the importance of investing in the professional growth of educators as a means to enhance overall educational quality. For head teachers, CPD is vital for developing practical leadership skills. As educational leaders, head teachers must navigate complex challenges, implement change, and inspire their staff. Evans (2014) emphasises that ongoing professional development enables head teachers to refine their leadership practices, fostering a positive school culture and improving staff morale. Leadership-focused CPD helps head teachers develop the skills necessary to support teachers, manage conflict, and engage with the community effectively.

In an ever-changing educational landscape, resilience and adaptability are essential for educators and school leaders. CPD provides teachers and head teachers opportunities to reflect on their practices, learn from challenges, and adapt to new educational trends and policies. According to Evers et al. (2016), continuous professional development fosters a mindset of growth and flexibility, enabling educators to respond effectively to the demands of their roles. This adaptability is crucial in times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, when educators had to rapidly transition to remote and hybrid learning models. CPD often promotes collaboration and networking among educators, which can lead to sharing best practices and collective problem-solving (Bendtsen et al., 2022). Research indicates that collaborative professional development initiatives, such as professional learning communities, create supportive environments where educators can discuss challenges, share resources, and learn from one another (Vangrieken et al., 2017). This collaborative approach not only enhances individual competencies but also strengthens the overall capacity of the school community. As classrooms become increasingly diverse, educators must be equipped to meet the varied needs of their students. CPD provides training on culturally responsive teaching, inclusive practices, and differentiated instruction. According to Ramlackhan and Catania (2022), professional development focused on diversity and inclusion equips educators with the skills necessary to create equitable learning environments that support all students. This emphasis on addressing diverse learning needs is crucial for fostering an inclusive educational system.

Despite its importance, several challenges hinder the effective implementation of CPD programs. One major challenge is the lack of alignment between CPD offerings and the actual needs of educators. Abakah (2023) suggests that many CPD programs do not adequately consider teachers' specific contexts and challenges, leading to a disconnect between training and practice. Additionally, limited resources in terms of time and funding pose significant barriers to effective CPD. Educators struggle to find time for professional development amidst their teaching responsibilities, and without sufficient financial support, schools may be unable to provide high-quality training opportunities (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015). To maximize the impact of CPD, several best practices have emerged in the literature:

1. **Needs Assessment**: Conducting thorough assessments to identify educators' specific professional development needs ensures that programs are relevant and targeted.
2. **Active Learning**: Engaging educators in hands-on, participatory learning experiences fosters a more profound understanding and application of new skills and knowledge.

3.  **Sustained Support**: Providing ongoing support and follow-up after initial training helps educators to reinforce and apply what they have learned.
4.  **Collaboration**: Encouraging collaboration among educators promotes shared learning and supports implementing new practices in the classroom.
5.  **Evaluation and Feedback**: Regularly evaluating CPD programs and incorporating participant feedback can lead to continuous improvement and adaptation to changing needs.

The literature review highlights the critical importance of professional development for educational leaders, particularly head teachers, in enhancing school effectiveness and student outcomes. It underscores the need for targeted training programs that align with educators' specific needs and contexts. Key competencies such as transformational and instructional leadership, interpersonal skills, and data-driven decision-making are essential for effective school management. Moreover, the review indicates that continuous professional development (CPD) is vital for fostering a culture of improvement and adaptability within schools. Challenges such as resource constraints and the misalignment of training offerings with actual needs must be addressed to maximize the impact of professional development initiatives. Overall, the literature establishes a strong foundation for understanding the professional development needs of head teachers and emphasizes the need for structured programs that can equip them with the necessary skills to navigate the evolving educational landscape. This context sets the stage for the subsequent research, which seeks to identify specific competencies and gaps among head teachers in Niger State.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study, utilising Borich's Need Assessment Model as a framework for identifying the professional development needs of head teachers and educational lecturers. This model facilitates understanding the gap between current competencies and the skills required for effective school management. The descriptive nature of the study allows for a comprehensive assessment of the skills needed across various contexts within Niger State, providing valuable insights into the professional development landscape.

### Sampling Technique

A multi-staging sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. The research was conducted across basic schools in Niger State, specifically within Zones A, B, and C, which comprise Nupe, Gwari, and Hausa-speaking populations. The following are the steps involved in the multi-stage sampling technique used for this study:

1. **Stratification**: The three zones in Niger State—Nupe, Gwari, and Hausa-speaking populations—were identified as strata to ensure representation of the diverse cultural and linguistic contexts within the state.
2. **Random Selection**: A random selection of public basic schools was conducted from each zone to participate in the study.
3. **Participant Selection**: 1,113 public head teachers were selected from these schools, alongside 28 lecturers from the Department of Education and Community Development at Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. This combination of head teachers and educational lecturers enhances the comprehensiveness of the data collected, providing multiple perspectives on professional development needs.
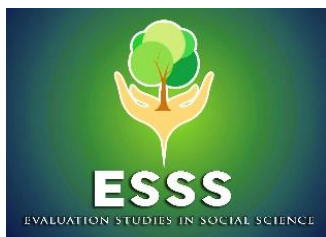
### *Instrument*

The primary data collection instrument for this study was a structured questionnaire comprising **30 items**. The questionnaire was administered over four weeks, allowing ample time for participants to respond. Trained research assistants facilitated the administration of the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and accuracy in the process. Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the relevant educational authorities, ensuring participants were informed about the study's purpose and their right to confidentiality. Participants were also required to provide informed consent before participating in the survey. The questionnaire included the following components:

1. **Demographic Information**: This section gathered data on participants' age, gender, years of experience, educational background, and the type of school managed.
2. **Skill Assessment**: Respondents rated their perceived competency in various school management skills, such as leadership, curriculum implementation, staff development, and community engagement.
3. **Professional Development Needs**: This section explored specific areas where head teachers identified the need for further training or support.

### *Validation and Reliability of the Instrument*

Several measures were implemented to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. First, content validity was established through a comprehensive literature review and expert feedback from educational professionals, ensuring the questionnaire items were relevant and precise. A pilot study was conducted with a small group of head teachers to test the questionnaire's clarity and functionality, allowing for refinements based on participant feedback. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, achieving a target score of 0.85, indicating excellent internal consistency among the items. Field testing confirmed these reliability estimates, validating the instrument's effectiveness for the primary study sample. These findings demonstrate that the questionnaire is both valid and reliable, providing a robust tool for accurately assessing the professional development needs of head teachers in

Niger State. The rigorous validation process enhances confidence in the study results and supports the conclusions drawn regarding the competencies required for effective school management.

*Data Analysis*

Data collected from the respondents were analysed using two primary statistical methods: Weighted Mean and Need Gap Analysis (NGA). Weighted Mean: This method was used to calculate the mean ratings of head teachers and lecturers on various professional development skills. Each item in the questionnaire was rated on a Likert scale, typically ranging from 1 (Not Needed) to 5 (Highly Needed). The weighted mean provided a more nuanced understanding of the perceived importance of each skill by considering the frequency of responses across different rating levels. Need Gap Analysis (NGA): This analysis identified discrepancies between current competencies and the skills required for effective school management. The need gap was calculated by subtracting the average competency rating from the average importance rating for each skill. A positive need gap indicated a significant demand for professional development. To assess the results, specific criteria were established: Cut-off Value: A need gap value of 0.5 or higher indicated a significant need for professional development. This threshold helped prioritise areas requiring urgent attention. Interpretation of Results: Mean ratings were categorised as follows: 1.0 - 2.0: Not Needed; 2.1 - 3.0: Moderately Needed; 3.1 - 4.0: Needed; 4.1 - 5.0: Highly Needed. Here are the meanings of the abbreviations used in the results findings: X1: Mean score of group 1 (e.g., head teachers). SD1: Standard deviation of group 1, indicating the variability of scores within that group. X2: Mean score of group 2 (e.g., educational lecturers). SD2: Standard deviation of group 2, reflecting the variability of scores within this group. GX: Grand mean score, representing the overall average across all groups or items. GSD: Grand standard deviation, measuring the overall variability of scores across all groups. Xn: Mean score for a specific skill or competency among all respondents. X: General mean score for a particular item or set of items. NGV: Need Gap Value, calculated to assess the difference between the importance and current competency ratings for specific skills. PDN: Professional Development Needs refers to areas where further training or support is required. Statistical analysis was conducted at a 0.05 level of significance to determine any significant differences in perceived needs between different groups of respondents. This rigorous analytical approach ensured that the findings accurately reflected the professional development needs of head teachers in Niger State, providing a solid foundation for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

**RESULTS**

The sample's demographic characteristics, which consisted of 1,113 head teachers and 28 educational lecturers, provided essential context for interpreting the findings. The participants represented a diverse range of backgrounds, including various age groups, years of experience

in education, and types of schools managed. This demographic information is crucial as it influences the perspectives and needs expressed regarding professional development.

### *Professional Development Skills for Effective Management*

The first research question aimed to identify the professional development skills necessary for head teachers to manage basic schools effectively. The results, summarised in Table 1, reflect the mean ratings of head teachers and lecturers regarding the importance of various management skills.

**Table 1**

*Mean Ratings of Head Teachers and Lecturers on Professional Development Skills Needed for Effective Management in Basic Schools*

| Management Cluster | Cluster Items | $X_1$ | $SD_1$ | $X_2$ | $SD_2$ | GX | GSD | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A (1) | Staff personnel management skills | 3.81 | 0.22 | 3.52 | 0.27 | 3.66 | 0.23 | HN |
| B (2) | Curriculum implementation management skills | 3.92 | 0.22 | 3.62 | 0.27 | 3.77 | 0.22 | HN |

The mean ratings indicate that both head teachers ($X_1$) and lecturers ($X_2$) perceive staff personnel management skills and curriculum implementation Management skills as "Highly Needed" (HN). The scores for staff personnel management skills averaged 3.81 for head teachers and 3.52 for lecturers, suggesting that while both groups recognize the importance of these skills, head teachers place a slightly higher value on them. Similarly, the curriculum implementation management skills ratings were 3.92 for head teachers and 3.62 for lecturers. The overall grand mean (GX) of 3.66 for staff management skills and 3.77 for curriculum implementation highlights a strong consensus on the necessity of these skills for effective school management. This underscores the critical role of professional development in enhancing the competencies of head teachers in these areas.

### *Skills Needed for Staff Personnel Management*

The second research question focused on identifying the specific professional development skills needed by head teachers for effective staff personnel management. The need gap analysis,

presented in Table 2, provides insights into the gaps between current skill levels and the necessary skills for effective management.

**Table 2**

*Need Gap Analysis of Head Teachers in Staff Personnel Management*

| S/N | Item Statements | $X_n$ | X | NGV | Remarks |
|-----|-----------------|-------|------|------|---------|
| 1 | Enforce the staff to perform their duties conscientiously | 3.91 | 3.08 | 0.83 | PDN |
| 2 | Enforce the staff to be punctual and regular at school | 3.92 | 3.29 | 0.63 | PDN |
| 3 | Attend to staff welfare and problems | 3.67 | 2.44 | 1.23 | PDN |
| 4 | Maintain effective teacher discipline | 3.73 | 2.68 | 1.05 | PDN |
| 5 | Design professional development activities for teachers | 3.81 | 2.37 | 1.44 | PDN |
| 6 | Encourage staff professional development through workshops | 3.88 | 2.55 | 1.33 | PDN |
| 7 | Maintain and upgrade staff morale | 3.79 | 2.37 | 1.42 | PDN |
| 8 | Keep up-to-date staff | 3.96 | 3.04 | 0.92 | PDN |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | personnel records | | | | |
| 9 | Carry out staff appraisal and evaluation | 3.75 | 2.63 | 1.12 | PDN |
| 10 | Provide professional leadership to the teachers | 3.60 | 2.27 | 1.33 | PDN |
| | Total | 3.80 | 2.67 | 1.13 | PDN |

The need gap values indicate the extent to which head teachers feel they require additional skills to manage their personnel effectively. All items exhibit positive need gap values, indicating a substantial demand for professional development. The highest need gap (1.55) was identified in the item related to encouraging staff to improvise instructional materials, while the second highest gap (1.44) pertained to designing professional development activities for teachers. These findings suggest that head teachers in Niger State recognise the necessity of enhancing their capabilities in staff management. Additionally, the overall average need gap of 1.13 reflects a significant area of focus for professional development programs to improve staff personnel management skills.

### Skills for Curriculum Implementation

The third research question sought to identify the professional development skills required by head teachers for effective curriculum implementation. The need gap analysis results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Need Gap Analysis of Head Teachers on Professional Development Skill Needs in Curriculum Implementation*

| S/N | Item Statements | $X_n$ | X | NGV | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11 | Maintain close supervision of classroom instruction | 3.93 | 2.49 | 1.44 | PDN |
| 12 | Implement the plans mapped out for the school | 3.94 | 2.56 | 1.38 | PDN |

| 13 | Encourage teachers to improvise instructional materials | 3.97 | 2.42 | 1.55 | PDN |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 14 | Ensure lesson preparation by checking teachers' lesson notes | 3.96 | 3.04 | 0.92 | PDN |
| 15 | Make effective use of assistant head teachers in monitoring | 3.94 | 2.56 | 1.38 | PDN |
| 16 | Ensure that teachers give assignments and homework | 3.68 | 3.05 | 0.63 | PDN |
| 17 | Ensure that teachers are present at the school assembly | 3.90 | 2.37 | 1.53 | PDN |
| 18 | Distribute pupils' termly reports to parents promptly | 3.95 | 3.19 | 0.76 | PDN |
| 19 | Interpret and monitor the implementation of educational policies | 3.91 | 2.49 | 1.42 | PDN |
|  | Total | 3.91 | 2.68 | 1.23 | PDN |

The need gap values for curriculum implementation skills were consistently positive, indicating a strong need for professional development. Notably, the highest need gap (1.55) was associated with encouraging teachers to improvise instructional materials, highlighting a significant growth area. Other critical areas included supervising classroom instruction closely (1.44) and ensuring lesson preparation by checking teachers' notes (1.38). The average need gap of 1.23 suggests that head teachers recognize the necessity for skill enhancement in curriculum implementation to foster effective learning environments.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings from the studies on professional development skills for head teachers in Niger State indicate that head teachers in Niger State require capacity-building in various areas, including conflict management and staff appraisal. This aligns with previous studies highlighting inadequate training and the need for structured professional development programs for school leaders in Nigeria (Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). The study identified staff personnel management and curriculum implementation as critical competencies. This aligns with Day et al. (2016), who emphasised that effective school leadership significantly influences student achievement through strong management of both staff and curriculum. Furthermore, previous studies have highlighted the importance of interpersonal skills and decision-making abilities in head teachers, suggesting that these competencies are crucial for fostering a positive school environment and enhancing teacher performance (Koskei et al., 2020). The analysis revealed notable deficiencies, particularly in designing professional development activities and promoting instructional innovation. This finding is consistent with Weinstein et al. (2018), which indicates that many educational leaders lack training in areas directly impacting teaching and learning. The gaps identified in this study suggest a need for structured programs that enhance management skills and encourage innovative teaching methods, which are essential for adapting to rapidly changing educational landscapes. The findings suggest that professional development should be tailored to the specific contexts and challenges faced by head teachers in Niger State. This aligns with Shabbir et al. (2024), which advocates for context-specific training that addresses local educational challenges. Additionally, previous research supports the idea that ongoing professional development, rather than one-off training sessions, fosters sustained improvements in leadership practices (Day, 2013). By addressing the identified gaps through targeted professional development programs, educational stakeholders can enhance the leadership capabilities of head teachers in Niger State, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational leadership by providing a localised perspective on the professional development needs of school leaders.

## CONCLUSION

The study on the professional development skills needed by head teachers for effective management of basic schools in Niger State has yielded several critical findings that underscore the importance of continuous professional development in enhancing educational leadership. The research identified key professional development skills for head teachers, such as staff personnel management and curriculum implementation. Both head teachers and lecturers rated these skills as "Highly Needed," indicating a strong consensus on the importance of these competencies for effective school management. The need gap analysis revealed significant discrepancies between the current skills of head teachers and the skills required for effective management. Notably, the highest need gaps were identified in areas such as designing professional development activities and encouraging staff improvisation in instructional
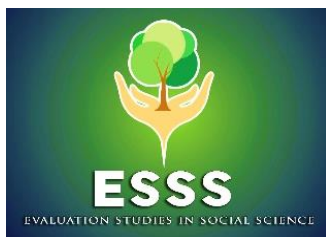
materials. This highlights critical areas for targeted professional development initiatives. The findings reinforced the connection between effective leadership and improved educational outcomes. Headteachers who engage in continuous professional development enhance their competencies and contribute to a favourable school climate and better student performance. The study identified several challenges headteachers face in accessing and participating in professional development programs. These include limited resources, time constraints, and a lack of alignment between available training and the specific needs of educators. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that educational authorities prioritise targeted professional development programs for head teachers, particularly in areas identified as having significant need gaps. Workshops and training sessions should focus on enhancing competencies in leadership, curriculum implementation, and community engagement, as these were highlighted as crucial for effective school management. Additionally, ongoing support and mentorship programs should be established to facilitate continuous learning and growth among head teachers. Collaboration with educational institutions and experts can further enrich these development initiatives. Finally, regular assessments should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the training programs, ensuring they remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of school leaders in Niger State. By implementing these recommendations, educational authorities can significantly enhance the capabilities of head teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes.
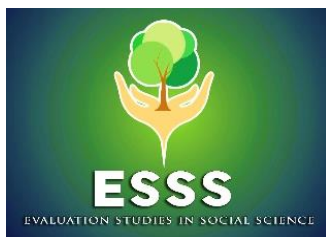
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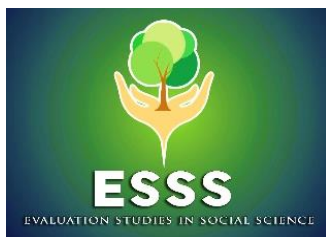
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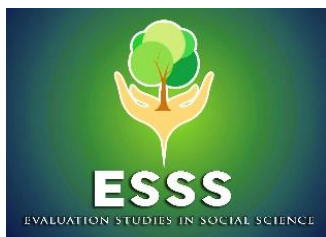
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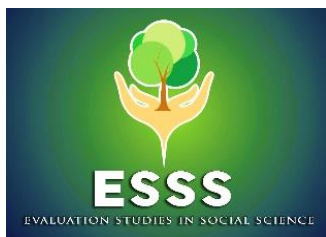
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