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Original Article

### Harnessing WhatsApp for Continuous Professional Development: A Self-Directed Approach for Luganda Teachers

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**Keywords:**

Continuous  
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Development,  
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Luganda.

This study examines the Luganda Teachers Association WhatsApp group as a self-directed Continuous Professional Development (CPD) medium. It was established that the group facilitates teacher collaboration, experience sharing, and skill development in areas such as pedagogy, lesson planning, classroom practices, and assessment. Employing discourse analysis, the researchers dedicated a significant portion of the study to examining members' posts, extracting meaning, and identifying themes and patterns aligned with the study's objectives. The analysis focused on forum administration, professional and social benefits, and prevalent discussion topics, providing a comprehensive understanding of the online community's dynamics. The findings highlight the benefits of using WhatsApp for professional and social development, including enhanced teaching skills and community building. However, the study also notes the potential risks of over-dependence on WhatsApp as a source of information, which may impact professional growth and mental well-being. The study recommends that teachers shouldn't entirely use WhatsApp for continuous professional development. The Ministry of Education should revive the traditional method of holding a physical CPD programme. A regulatory framework is also necessary to help teachers overcome dependence on WhatsApp as a professional development outlet.

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**INTRODUCTION**

The world is undergoing a profound technological transformation, impacting various aspects of life. A significant shift from traditional analogue to digital communication has revolutionized the way we interact. Activities previously confined to physical settings are now conducted online, leveraging platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp.

This digital shift has also transformed the teaching and learning landscape, making educational resources and interactions easily accessible. Online platforms have enabled teachers and students to engage in discussions, assessments, and oral interviews without physical meetings. Furthermore, physical training sessions, workshops, and conferences are now often organized in virtual or blended formats, offering greater flexibility and reach.

Traditionally, Teacher Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs have been conducted in-person, allowing educators to revisit theoretical knowledge and skills, receive guidance from experienced educators, and engage in professional interactions with peers. These physical CPD programs facilitated socialization, collaboration, and reflection among teachers, enabling them to refine their teaching strategies and discuss pedagogical and subject-related issues.

However, a notable shift is occurring, with online modes increasingly replacing traditional in-person CPD programs. This transition is transforming the way teachers engage in professional development, potentially altering the dynamics of interaction and collaboration.

These innovations have significantly improved delivery. E-learning has expanded access to

education, allowing an unlimited number of learners to access educational resources without physical constraints. E-learning has come with several advantages which include increased accessibility, reliability and flexibility. However, technological progress has also introduced social and economic challenges, such as the cost of gadgets and software upgrades, information security, data distortion, and occasional delivery problems. Over reliance on e-functions may lead to social disintegration and diminished creativity and critical thinking. Overall, technological advancements have transformed various aspects of life, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, virtual modes have successfully connected Luganda teachers, facilitated the sharing of information and enhanced teaching practices. The widespread ownership of smartphones among these educators has rendered e-access modes a cost-effective alternative to traditional physical workshops and conferences. Notably, WhatsApp has emerged as a prominent platform, enabling teachers to interact and improve their pedagogical skills.

**WhatsApp Media**

WhatsApp is a widely used instant messaging app, available for free with minimal complexity. Its ease of use and instant connectivity have made it a popular choice for teachers. WhatsApp facilitates daily interactions among teachers, both professionally and socially. Despite challenges such as distortion and economic constraints. WhatsApp media has effectively brought Luganda teachers together, enabling them to learn, discuss, ask questions on a given issue/concept and get responses instantly. WhatsApp is equated to the Zoom platform, and it has become a cost-effective

alternative to physical workshops and conferences, capturing the space of traditional interactions at minimum cost Archibald.

The Luganda Teachers Association (LTA) has leveraged WhatsApp as a medium for sharing information, supporting knowledge and skills acquisition. The LTA WhatsApp Forum, with 650 members and growing, aims to unite Luganda teachers for professional and social services. Although it provides social support, 97% of the information shared focuses on knowledge and skills. With an average of 120 daily posts, the forum maintains focus through strict moderation, deleting irrelevant content.

The success of the LTA WhatsApp Forum has led to the formation of LTA SACCO, an economic support wing. LTA SACCO complements the LTA WhatsApp forum by mobilising members for economic empowerment, offering savings and low-interest loans to registered members. With 160 active members, the SACCO has become an effective strategy for member retention and social support.

The forum uses both Luganda (Language widely spoken language in Uganda) and English languages, with English used for emphasis on specific references or quotations, such as syllabus discussions. A set of guidelines, akin to a constitution, governs the forum, and members are expected to adhere to these rules to minimize unverified information.

Six experienced teachers administer the forum, responsible for enforcing the guidelines, allowing entry, and deleting posts that violate the rules. This administration structure has effectively minimized the spread of misinformation, as administrators are alerted to non-compliant posts and can swiftly intervene to delete offending content.

### Research Problem

The increasing adoption of WhatsApp among Luganda teachers is transforming the traditional

landscape of teacher professional development, potentially replacing physical meetings. This shift underscores the need to evaluate the administrative structure, benefits (both professional and social), and impact of WhatsApp-based professional development on teachers' classroom practices and its general effectiveness, whether it generates the same impact as the physical interaction impact. Furthermore, understanding the feedback and dynamics within the group is crucial. This study aims to investigate these aspects, providing valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners to inform decision-making and optimize the use of WhatsApp for teacher development.

### Objectives of the Study.

- Investigate the administrative structure and processes governing the LTA WhatsApp group.
- Explore members' professional advantages from participating in the LTA WhatsApp group.
- Identify the social benefits that members gain from being part of the LTA WhatsApp group.
- Determine the key areas of pedagogy that can be improved through participation in the LTA WhatsApp group.
- Categories and analyse the frequently discussed topics related to the Luganda syllabus within the LTA WhatsApp group.

### Research Questions

- What is the administrative structure and how are processes managed within the LTA WhatsApp group?
- What professional benefits do members derive from participating in the LTA WhatsApp group?

- What social advantages do members gain from being part of the LTA WhatsApp group?
- In what key areas of pedagogy can the LTA WhatsApp group enhance teachers' teaching skills?
- What topics related to the Luganda syllabus are most frequently discussed within the LTA WhatsApp group, and how are they categorized?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Framework

The study employed the Connectivism learning theory, which emphasizes learning through connections and networks. It's particularly relevant in today's digital age, where technology plays a significant role in education. Connectivism begins when an individual turns to digital technology, in this case, the WhatsApp forum, to solve a problem. This can include actions such as googling a question or searching for topical social media content. The theory helps to solve a problem and, in turn, deepens understanding.

Applying connectivism theory to Luganda teachers' professional development through WhatsApp was realized through the creation of the LTA WhatsApp group, which enabled teachers to connect, share, and learn from each other. The forum facilitated the sharing of relevant resources and teaching practices related to Luganda language teaching, allowing teachers to discuss best practices, lesson plans, and activities that have been applied by teachers for effective teaching. Teachers utilize the platform to post questions or challenges they face in their teaching practice, receiving valuable feedback and support from peers. The group also engaged in discussions on topics related to the new Competence-Based Curriculum, fostering a collaborative environment. This type of engagement not only enhanced professional growth but also created social bonds between Luganda teachers. (Blanchnio & Przepiorka, 2016) To ensure

the group remained focused and connected, administrators were put in place for proper coordination, overseeing the flow of information and maintaining the group's objectives.

While some studies suggest that WhatsApp CPD program can improve teachers' instructional practices others have found that the impact may be limited if the CPD activities are not carefully designed and implemented (Dabbagh. & Kitsantas, 2012). Further research is needed to understand how WhatsApp-based CPD is designed to maximize its impact on classroom practices

It is true that mobile technology and social media platforms including WhatsApp have transformed the way teachers interact with students and deliver instruction (Kukulska-Hulme, 2013) but the validity of this assertion requires thorough interrogation depending on various setups and environment. (Best et al., 2014) There is enough evidence to the fact that WhatsApp is a promising tool for educators to enhance teaching and learning. (Perez. E. et. el. (2023). With its widespread adoption and user-friendly interface, WhatsApp offers a unique opportunity for teachers to facilitate communication, share resources, and promote collaborative learning. (Rama. A. 2021). On the other hand, teachers' continuous professional development, which is an essential part of teachers' service, WhatsApp engagement helps teachers with information to stay updated with best practices, pedagogical innovations, and subject matter expertise. (Manday et al, 2019) WhatsApp, with its prevalence and accessibility, has the potential to serve as a valuable tool for teachers' continuous professional development (Rambe & Bere, 2013). By facilitating peer-to-peer learning, resource sharing, and collaborative problem-solving, WhatsApp can provide teachers with supportive social and just-in-time learning opportunities. Researched-based justification is required to prove its validity.

Despite all this good news about WhatsApp gaining popularity in recent years, various studies have

highlighted its potential benefits and challenges. One of the key gaps in the literature is the lack of clarity on the administrative organization of WhatsApp groups for the CPD program. Accordingly, this is the quality of group management, including setting clear goals, establishing norms for participation, and ensuring inclusivity. This study will address this and provide recommendations on the administration of the forum.

This literature review, therefore, examines the role of WhatsApp in supporting the teaching and learning process. Both the teachers and the learners, as key players in the process, have received a bigger share of the review in general, with particular emphasis on continuous professional development. Benefits, limitations, and effective strategies for implementation have been highlighted.

### **WhatsApp Application in Teaching and Learning**

As stated in the preceding sections, the integration of WhatsApp in educational settings is transforming the teaching-learning paradigm. As a valuable pedagogical tool, WhatsApp offers numerous benefits, including enhanced accessibility to educational resources, facilitated communication, and personalized learning experiences (Shoorai, 2024). Students can utilize WhatsApp to store notes, engage in revision activities, and foster social interactions with peers and instructors, thereby promoting character development, literacy skills, and self-expression and this applies to teachers during CPD programs. The asynchronous nature of WhatsApp forums enables participating teachers to articulate their thoughts and opinions freely, which may not be feasible in traditional CPD settings. While some studies suggest that WhatsApp-based CPD can improve teachers' instructional practices, others have found that the impact may be limited if the CPD activities are not carefully designed and implemented (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Therefore, there is a need to understand how WhatsApp-based CPD can be

designed to maximize its impact on classroom practices.

On the other hand, excessive WhatsApp as a teaching/learning tool can hinder teachers' social, psychological, and skills development, particularly in areas requiring face-to-face interaction, such as networking and confidence-building (Best, et. al., 2014). Moreover, over-reliance on digital communication may impede the development of essential language skills, including listening and speaking. (Gonzales, A. L & Hancock, 2011). While interface-based learning can enhance decision-making, independent thinking, and creativity, the ease of copy-pasting for both teachers and students can undermine teachers' critical thinking and analytical skills (O'Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Whereas the potential of effective communication is crucial in teachers' daily interactions with peers and students, its effectiveness requires serious interrogation. How it can be sustained through WhatsApp discussions is an important question. Seeking clarifications, and prompt responses, fostering a collaborative learning environment and encouraging active participation are at the centre of WhatsApp usage, but the extent and validity of this in different teaching and learning environments is crucial. Again, effective communication helps learners become independent and problem solvers, and high thinkers when they present their interactive skills. Teachers can share educational resources, such as videos, images, and documents, with students, making it easier for them to access learning materials, especially in areas where resources are scarce. However, this can only be effective when the learner has already mastered communication skills. (Kumar. J. 2021).

Education resources are a crucial support tool for teaching and learning. Teachers utilize WhatsApp to share these resources, thereby easing learning. In areas where educational resources are scarce, WhatsApp helps bridge the gap, reaching numerous learners regardless of their location. Materials such



as videos, images, and documents can be effortlessly shared with students, facilitating easier access to learning resources. This is effective where resources are accessible and its quality and relevance well ascertained. (Best, et. al 2014).

As stated, using WhatsApp as a learning tool comes with flexibility advantages. WhatsApp's multimedia capabilities cater to different learning styles, providing an adaptable learning environment. It also provides adequate time for the learner to grasp a particular concept at one's own pace. Enhanced communication allows real-time discussions and clarifications between teachers and students. This helps foster a collaborative learning environment and encourages active participation (Kumar, J. 2021).

Additionally, WhatsApp's multimedia capabilities cater to different learning styles, providing an adaptable learning environment. Teachers can tailor their communication to specific students' needs, providing personalized feedback and support (Ali. M, A. et, al.. 2021). This also applies to learners in diverse situations and statuses. So long as the learner can access the gadget and can purchase data, WhatsApp will be a practical option for learning and adaptable to teachers' efforts to improve their teaching practice. (Ae. Ri, et. al 2016)

It is in teachers' pedagogical initiation that whenever teaching takes place, feedback becomes a necessity, but this has not been given thorough consideration by researchers on WhatsApp tools in teaching and learning. (Joan. D. R, 2022) The quality of feedback in any educational interaction within online communities is critical to their effectiveness. However, the literature suggests that facilitating meaningful feedback and discussion within WhatsApp groups can be challenging, particularly if group members are not familiar with the platform or do not have a clear understanding of the group goals. This is one area **in which** this study is focusing **on**; feedback and management of the feedback.

## **WhatsApp and Teachers' Continuous Professional Development.**

Improvement of teachers' instructional practices can be a great achievement, but the impact may be limited if the CPD activities are not streamlined and implemented (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012). Any impactful CPD program requires well-laid-out goals and objectives. However, the genesis, nature and application of most WhatsApp groups may fail to meet this standard because there are no pre-formal engagements to address this issue.

Using WhatsApp in teachers' CPD offers numerous benefits, including enhanced collaboration and networking opportunities, access to resources and expertise and personalised support and feedback. However, limitations such as privacy concerns, potential distractions (Kumar et. al., 2019), and unequal access to technology need to be addressed to achieve equal advantages for all participating teachers.

## **Disadvantages of Using WhatsApp.**

Using WhatsApp as a teaching and learning tool has become an addiction for teachers. This, therefore, affects the innovative capacity of teachers. Teaching is ever-changing depending on the environment and other factors. Therefore, using WhatsApp as a teacher's continuous development medium may affect teachers' critical thinking and innovation, which are key areas of effective learning and teaching. Overdependence on WhatsApp as a source of information may impact users' mental and physical health. Research suggests that excessive WhatsApp use can lead to addiction, social isolation, and decreased productivity (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011). A study by Błachnio & Przepiorka (2016) found that WhatsApp addiction was positively correlated with symptoms of depression and anxiety. Therefore, teachers should be warned about the negative impact of the overuse of overusing WhatsApp. It has been established that some teachers may use WhatsApp for revision and

during teaching, and this consumes teachers' and students' time.

- Over-dependence on WhatsApp for learning purposes leads to the accumulation of information, some of which may not be necessary at a particular point in time. This is very critical to teachers who are accessing information for improvement purposes. Instead of improving pedagogical skills and content revision, it turns into a hobby and, thereafter, brain fatigue. Overload and Fatigue. The information overloads and fatigue. It has been reported in a study by Misra & Stokols (2012) that excessive exposure to digital information can lead to feelings of overwhelm, stress, and burnout.
- Although members of WhatsApp groups may seem to have a common denominator, in this case being teachers, there are still other social and economic differences that may ignite comparison, which can negatively impact self-esteem (Toma et.al.2008). This is because people tend to present their inner social and economic being, which may frustrate others who don't meet such a high status. This is dangerous and may cause confidence and self-esteem. This can also be a source of conflict, thus affecting the group's objectives. Since teachers who join the group are some new entrants in the field compared to others with vast experience in the field of teaching, the new entrants may feel inferior, thus uncomfortable participating in the discussion, which is complicated by the senior teachers. Therefore, the professional and social benefits of WhatsApp-based CPD are not well understood. While some studies suggest that WhatsApp-based CPD can provide opportunities for teachers to connect with colleagues, share resources, and receive support, others have raised concerns about the potential for information overload, social distractions, and decreased motivation.

The use of WhatsApp needs to be regulated at various levels. Therefore, more conversations on how policymakers and educators can leverage WhatsApp-based CPD to inform policy decisions and improve teacher development programs is critical. According to Dabbagh & Kitsantas (2012), the effective use of social media for CPD requires careful consideration of the pedagogical, social, and technical factors that influence online learning.

The effectiveness and sustainability of WhatsApp-based CPD are also under-researched. While some studies suggest that WhatsApp-based CPD can be an effective way to support teacher development, others have raised concerns about the potential challenges of decreased participation and engagement over time. Independent decision from individual teachers is important to determine the extent of using WhatsApp as a learning medium.

In conclusion, this literature review provides ground for teachers to assess the benefits and challenges of participating in any WhatsApp groups for purposes of improving pedagogy and general classroom practices. To maximize the benefits of these conversations, which can enhance teaching practices through reminders, hypothesis testing, idea generation, experience sharing, and network building, teachers should be aware of the potential effects. Meanwhile, because of WhatsApp group administrators' key roles in guiding members on digital etiquette, establishing unwritten rules and norms to ensure productive and respectful interactions, they should be identified cautiously. By doing so, teachers can harness the full potential of WhatsApp as a tool for teacher professional development and collaboration.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a discourse analysis design, which is a valuable methodology for studying online interactions, such as WhatsApp discussions. It helps understand how participants interact, share knowledge, and construct meaning within the online community. By analyzing members' posts, the study

managed to generate themes and patterns, social dynamics, professional benefits and frequently discussed topics. For triangulation purposes, focus group discussions together with question-and-answer tools were developed and utilized. The 6 WhatsApp administrators, together with 100 teachers, were tasked to supply the information required.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data and discussion are presented simultaneously based on the themes generated from the research objectives and questions.

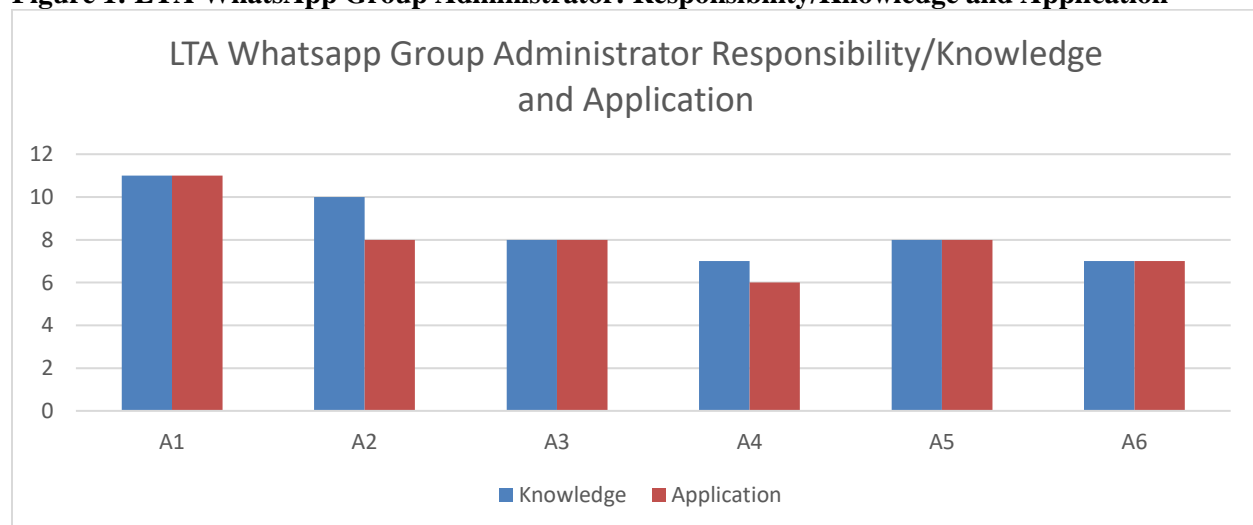
### Theme 1: Administrative Structure and Processes Management of LTA WhatsApp Group.

The LTA WhatsApp group is professionally managed by a team of six experienced teachers who initiated the group. The administrators' seniority and experience confer several advantages. Firstly, they demonstrate a vested interest in the group's affairs, having previously mentored junior teachers during their secondary school level and during the course of teacher training. This hierarchical structure ensures that group members respect guidelines and leadership.

The administrators possess the authority to regulate membership, permit entry and remove teachers whose posts contravene established rules. This framework minimizes the dissemination of unverified information. The presence of multiple administrators ensures timely intervention, with at least one administrator typically available to address issues and delete non-compliant content.

The group's structure fosters active participation, allowing members to contribute freely to topics within the group's scope without limitations on post-effects. This openness facilitates diverse perspectives and opinions. The primary language of communication is Luganda, with English used minimally for clarity or referencing English-language sources. In cases of controversy, administrators engage in external consultations with senior or experienced teachers, leveraging research and data to inform decisions. These consultations provide a basis for verification and credible responses, with senior teachers' rulings taking precedence. Discussions may span multiple days, incorporating teachers' experiences and sources. Based on the above focus group discussion information, group leaders were provided responses that justified knowledge of LTA WhatsApp roles. The table diagram responds.

**Figure 1: LTA WhatsApp Group Administrator: Responsibility/Knowledge and Application**





The figure shows the six Administrators of the WhatsApp group and how knowledgeable they are in enforcing the expectations of the group administration. At the same time, it displays whether an administrator has applied the guidelines. In all, it's about efficiency and fostering order within the WhatsApp group. The expectations are shown below. This has been compounded during the focus group discussion. Teachers stressed the importance of an administrator's knowledge in guiding the discussion and drawing conclusions from a variety of submissions.

### Expectations of a WhatsApp Group Administrator

- Adding Participants
- Removing Group Member
- Appointing Administrator
- Deleting Messages
- Restricting Members Rights
- Restricting Membership
- Removing Admin Rights
- Sending Messages
- Editing Group Information
- Deleting Group
- Emerging Groups

During discussions with teachers, it was established that even the non-administrators are aware of the leaders' roles. This brings sanity to the forum since each one is aware of his/her responsibility.

### Guidelines for the LTA WhatsApp Forum

To ensure effective and respectful communication, and to promote a positive and productive discussion environment within the forum, the administrators developed guidelines. These guidelines are

presented as they are in the Luganda language with a translated version.

- Buli muntu akkirizibwa okuteesa ku nsonga yonna ebeera mu ddiro n'obukkakkamu. (*Each member is encouraged to contribute to discussions with humility, sharing their thoughts and ideas in a respectful and considerate manner.*)
- Buli ndowooza ya muntu eweebwe ekitiibwa ne bw'oba ggwe togiwagira. Ensonga ezigasa abatono ennyo si za kutekebwa ku mukutu guno. (*Respect for each one's views is paramount. Issues that benefit fewer people will not be allowed on the forum.*)
- Buli muntu akkirizibwa okuteesa mu lulimi Luganda weewawo n'olulala tetulukugidde nnyo kasita luba nga lutegeerebwa abasinga ku mukutu. (The main language is Luganda but, English may be used when necessary to facilitate clear communication and ensure inclusivity)
- Tokkirizibwa kuvvoola, wadde okuvuma munnamukutu guno. (*Abusive, vulgar, or obscene language will not be tolerated. Members are expected to communicate respectfully and professionally at all times*)
- Okkirizibwa okusomesa ensonga yonna etuyambira awamu, abalala basobola okwongerezaako/okutoolako. (*Members are welcome to post issues that benefit the community and align with the group's scope and objectives*).
- Okussa ekitiibwa mu bakulembeze baffe kikulu. (*Members are encouraged to respect group administrators.*)
- Buli munnamukutu anadduukirirwanga mu buzibu nga mu kufiirwa singa naye anaabanga ajjumbira eby'abalala. (*Active participation in social support is key. Failure to contribute to*

*the support network may result in limited support being provided to the individual).*

- Tewali mmemba akkirizibwa kuwemula wadde okussa obubaka obw'obusegu ku mukutu guno (*The use of obscene, vulgar, or offensive language is strictly prohibited*)
- Era omukutu gujja kubanga ne bakalondoozi abanaalondoolanga n'okusunsula ebikolebwa.class monitor (*Class monitors will be appointed to facilitate coordination*).
- Tokkirizibwa kuvvoola Bwakabaka ne Kabaka (*Posting messages that disparage or disrespect the Kabaka (King) and Kabakaship(Kingdom) is strictly prohibited and considered a serious offence.*)
- Twewale okumala gasindika mawulire ge tatalinaako bukakafu mu ngeri y'okuvvoola, okukyamy n'okusasamaza. Twewale gaweereza buvudde walala by'oteekakasa oba ebitagasa.( *Members are expected to refrain from sharing unverified information that may cause disorder or disruption within the group*).
- Amaloboozi amoogere 'Audio' okuggyako nga ga nsonga nnyo tugeewale nnyo. Twettanire kuwandiika anti tuli bannalulimi (*The use of audio messages should be restricted to exceptional circumstances where they are deemed essential, in order to maintain the efficacy and clarity of text-based discussions within the forum*).
- Toteekeddwa Kusaasaanya biwandiiko bitali bibyo naddala ebyo ebirina Ssekkonotawaanyisibwa (copyright). Obukulembeze bw'omukutu guno teguvunaanyizibwa ku biyinza kuva mu ekyo ng'ogudde mu ntata!.( *The group administrators are not liable for any copyrighted documents shared by members within the group. Members are responsible*

*for ensuring that any shared content complies with applicable copyright laws and regulations.*

#### **Weetegereze (Note):**

- Amateeka gano gayinza okukyusibwamu okusinzira ku mbeera (*These rules are bound to change anytime and whoever breaks any rule will be deleted forthwith*)
- Anaamenya erimu ku mateeka agafuga omukutu guno mu bugenderevu oba mu butali, kuggyibwa ku kibanja kino embagirawo (*whoever disrespects these guidelines will be deleted from the forum*)

The above rules/guidelines are enforced by the group administrators 24 hours. Any information outside the scope of the forum is deleted forthwith. Providing false or unverified information or behaving in a manner that is contrary to the group's objectives leads to suspension and expulsion. This has helped the group to be transparent and only post information which serves the group's purpose. Whenever deviation is seen, the administrators re-post the dos and don'ts as a reminder of the expectations of the group. Most of the teachers are aware of these guidelines and they can do the enforcement without waiting for administrators. Another thing emphasized in the focus group discussion is that teachers respect the rules which eases the administrators' work.

#### **Theme 2: Professional Benefits of Participating in Members**

The questions were:

- What professional benefits have you gained from participating in the LTA WhatsApp group?
- How have you utilized these professional benefits?

The following table provides the benefits gained by the participating teachers. The table provides a

summary of both the questionnaire responses and the issues captured during the focus group discussion.

**Table 1: Benefits Gained**

Thematic Area	Type of Benefit
1. Teacher Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Registration in service</li> <li>● Increased Awareness of Teachers' Conduct</li> <li>● Respect for students, colleagues, and the community</li> <li>● Maintaining professional boundaries and confidentiality</li> <li>● Upholding ethical standards in teaching and learning</li> <li>● Continuous professional development and growth</li> <li>● Accountability and responsibility in teaching practices</li> </ul>
2. Professional Presentation During Teaching Service Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Application Processes</li> <li>● Sharing Call for Application</li> <li>● Interview requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Dress Code</li> <li>■ Punctuality</li> <li>■ Confidence</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Preparation/common interview questions.</li> <li>● Body Language</li> </ul>
3. Presentation in the Classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Language</li> <li>● Dress code</li> <li>● Students Psychology</li> <li>● Management of classes with Diverse Characteristics</li> </ul>
4. Handling Students Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Management of Students with Diverse behaviour</li> </ul>
5. Lesson Plan (LP) and Scheme of Work S.O.W Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lesson Plan and S.O.W Development</li> </ul>

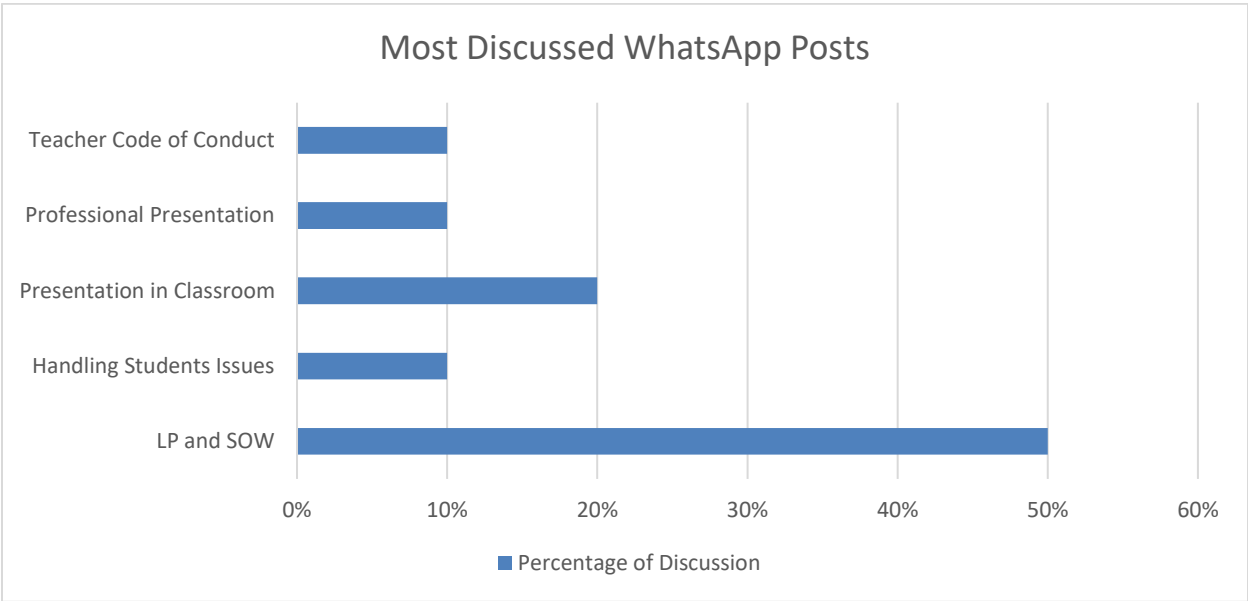
The benefits mentioned in Table 1 above were identified through a thorough analysis of various posts and discussions with members. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the professional advantages/benefits that members derive from their interactions. Below are the means applied to gain from the post.

- Question and Answer

- Sharing documents
- Write-ups
- Private Inbox Discussion

**Most Discussed Benefit.**

Figure 2: Most Discussed WhatsApp Posts



The most discussed posts include

- Scheme of Work (SOW) and Lesson Plans (LP) (50%): Teachers frequently discuss and seek guidance on developing SOW and LP, particularly in light of the new Competence-Based Curriculum.
- Classroom Presentation (20%): Teachers are interested in understanding learner-centred teaching approaches and managing classroom presentations effectively under the new curriculum.

Other frequently discussed topics (10% each):

- Teacher Code of Conduct
- Professional Presentation
- Handling Student Issues The general views are:
  - a) Teachers are focused on adapting to the new curriculum.
  - b) They are developing their professional skills.
  - c) High engagement in SOW and LP indicates a desire to refine practices.

Other aspects which were captured in the discussions that benefited the teacher's participation in the WhatsApp group are:

***Enriching members' language usage.***

Constant exposure and use of the Luganda language enriches one's semantic, syntactical, and socio-cultural understanding. Through the WhatsApp forum, teachers leverage rich language expressions in various contexts, facilitating vocabulary enrichment and learning. Guidance on contextual vocabulary usage and alternatives have been particularly valuable, while adherence to standard writing norms has ensured correct spelling in everyday discussions. Whenever a misspelt word is posted, prompt corrections follow which further enriches group members' language skills. This collaborative environment not only expands teachers' vocabulary but also promotes standard Luganda language usage, with members correcting each other's spelling mistakes and enhancing their overall capacity to learn and use new words, phrases, and expressions.

***Verification of Information***

Teachers are at times uncertain about some issues. Teachers may require a second party to support a

certain argument and or to disqualify a certain issue at stake. In such circumstances, receive guidance from fellow teachers, which may be supported by multidisciplinary ideas and supported with data and evidence. In this case, the forum presented respondents with a particular concept or question as if it were a research project. In the end, the answer is arrived at through different ideas from different sources and contexts. Through this approach, concepts and ideas were verified.

- Teachers share diverse perspectives and evidence-based information.
- Collaborative problem-solving: Members work together to verify concepts and ideas.

### ***Innovations***

Teachers' professional growth and success are fueled by extensive reading and exposure to new ideas and information. Through discussions on specific aspects, teachers gain access to new knowledge and skills, enabling them to stay current with developments in their field. For instance, the new Competence-Based Curriculum demands ongoing access to information, and teachers' forums, such as those on WhatsApp, provide a platform for sharing experiences, resources, and best practices. These online forums facilitate the exchange of ideas on effective teaching strategies, including the use of digital applications. As information and knowledge evolve with technological advancements, WhatsApp forums serve as a valuable entry point for testing and exploring new ideas, allowing teachers to stay updated on the latest trends and research. Teachers' forum helps one another to grasp the idea.

### ***Professional and Social experience sharing***

Working and interacting with fellow Luganda teachers on a WhatsApp group builds a rich and tested experience for individual teachers. Discussion in the group is supported by informed ideas from teachers coming from various

backgrounds. For example, learning and mastering the way Luganda words are written requires a lot of experience and support. Whenever a spelling mistake is observed, teachers respond with the correct spelling. Over time, teachers gain experience in writing standard Luganda. Experiences on assessment of a particular component is shared and hence mastery of the marking by those with less or no experience. Frequent engagement with fellow teachers who are always willing to share experiences builds other teachers' experiences. Like any other social media platform, the WhatsApp forum eases communication between parties. In this case, between teachers. Luganda teachers, get information by engaging fellow teachers on different syllabus matters and most specifically on how to teach a particular topic or interpretation of a concept. Of interest. Therefore, teachers learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses and, members share and adopt best practices in teaching and assessment. It is important to note that, besides professional experience sharing, benchmarking rich social experiences were recorded.

### ***Reminder forum***

Professionals should be reminded of their code of conduct and professional ethics. LTA forum is used as an avenue to remind teachers of the critical need to exercise the professional code of conduct at school and outside the school environment. This is something which is learnt from teacher training institutions which sometimes in-service teachers forget. Examples of teachers committing an offence as far as the code of conduct is concerned are shared, and general discussion ensues.

Also, teachers ask questions on any topic as provided on the syllabus. In many instances, teachers would wish to be reminded of a particular issue which they might have forgotten or know but a teacher needs more information or clarification. This is done through a general discussion or using the question-and-answer method. It is therefore



important to note that teachers should always be reminded of their professional ethics and responsibilities is important. Again, they should ask questions, seek clarification, and discuss topics of interest to enhance forum relevancy.

The WhatsApp group provides a platform for teachers to learn from each other, share experiences, and stay updated on best practices in teaching Luganda.

### **Theme 3: Social Advantages and Personal Benefits**

Findings under social advantages and personal benefits, Objective no 3, highlight two primary social benefits of participating in LTA WhatsApp CPD programs:

#### **Social Support**

- Emotional support during difficult times (e.g., bereavement)
- Celebratory support during happy moments (e.g., weddings)

#### **Financial Support and Physical Presence**

This mutual support system strengthens social bonds among teachers. The following financial benefits were established during the discussion.

- Savings and loan access through the LTA Sacco
- Support for major purchases (land, cars, domestic items)
- Assistance with school fees and tuition

The Findings, therefore, stress the following issues;

- Social support and financial benefits enhance teacher relationships and participation.
- Reciprocity is essential for receiving support.
- LTA Sacco has positively impacted members' social well-being.

The study demonstrates the value of LTA WhatsApp CPD programs in fostering a sense of community and providing support to teachers beyond their professional development.

### **Theme 4: Key Pedagogy Areas Enhance Teachers' Teaching Skills?**

One of the most important areas that builds teachers' capacity to deliver in different environments is pedagogy. This study considered pedagogy as the professional skills employed by teachers in delivering meaningful lessons. This has always been a critical item whenever teaching and learning are discussed. Through discussion with teachers, this study established that the most discussed pedagogical areas again focused on the methods of delivering the new Competence-Based Curriculum.

The study identifies crucial pedagogy areas that can improve teachers' teaching skills, particularly in the context of the new Competence-Based Curriculum:

- Building a Learner-Centred Class Fostering an environment that prioritizes student engagement and autonomy.
- Handling Large Classes Strategies for managing large classes effectively while maintaining student engagement.
- Development of Teaching Resources Creating and utilizing relevant resources to support student learning.
- Assessment under the New Curriculum Understanding and implementing effective assessment methods.
- Building Active Learner Participation Encouraging students to take an active role in their learning.

The discussions and questions were largely focused on the new curriculum, indicating a need for targeted support and guidance. By focusing on these pedagogy areas, teachers can enhance their teaching skills and better support student learning in the

context of the new curriculum through the LTA WhatsApp group.

### **Theme 5: Frequently Discussed Syllabus Topics**

The Luganda teaching syllabus for secondary schools encompasses various topics, including:

#### **Language Topics**

- Grammar: Understanding the structure and rules of the Luganda language.
- Language skills: Developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Composition writing: Creating written content in Luganda.

#### **Literature and Cultural Topics**

- Literature set books: Studying selected literary works in Luganda.
- Culture: Exploring the cultural context and significance of culture in building values and virtues.
- Recognising individuals who have contributed to the development of the Luganda language, culture and literature has been highlighted under the topic of prominent contributors. This comprehensive syllabus aims to develop students' proficiency in the Luganda language and appreciation of its literature and rich cultural heritage.

#### **Integrated Discussion Approach**

The study reveals that discussions among teachers often involve multiple topics intersecting, making it challenging to isolate a single most-discussed topic. This integrated approach mirrors the Competence-Based Curriculum's emphasis on interconnected learning.

### **Benefits of Integrated Discussions**

The holistic discussions naturally blend topics, reflecting real-world applications. This approach also aligns with the curriculum's integrated teaching methodology.

Therefore, the syllabus aspects are not isolated. This promotes a learner-centred approach, which has frequently been discussed on the LTA WhatsApp forum.

Implications of these integrated discussions can inform effective teaching practices at the same time, supporting the Competence-Based Curriculum's goals.

These findings highlight the value of integrated discussions in teacher professional development and curriculum implementation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations were drawn.

- Policymakers should provide a framework that guides the use of social WhatsApp in education.
- The Ministry of Education should revive the teachers' CPD programs.
- The Ministry should at times use WhatsApp to support teachers' initiatives of accessing verified and formal information.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study's findings suggest that WhatsApp can be a valuable tool for supplementing formal teachers' programs. The 24/7 access to peer consultation and experience sharing can enhance teaching and assessment practices. The New Competence-Based Curriculum has not been well grasped by teachers; therefore, updates and reminders have encouraged teacher participation and engagement in WhatsApp conversations.

However, to mitigate potential drawbacks, such as promoting "copy and paste" teaching methods, practical regulations and guidelines for effective

WhatsApp use in teachers' CPD programs should be established. While WhatsApp can be a valuable tool for professional growth and development, teachers need to be aware of its limitations and potential lack of formal recognition. For example.

- WhatsApp-based CPD might not be formally recognized by institutions for promotion or further studies.
- CPD programs on WhatsApp may not be accredited or certified.
- In case WhatsApp engagement is recognized, teachers may need to maintain records of their WhatsApp-based CPD activities to demonstrate their engagement, which is not tenable. By being mindful of these factors, teachers can effectively utilize WhatsApp for professional growth while also meeting formal requirements.

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