

ADMINISTRATION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION AND TEACHERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The paper deals with the administration of primary education and the teachers' professional development. The paper further discussed the concepts of teachers' professional development and training, types of staff training/development programmes was also captured in this paper. However its challenges and the way forward was enumerated which include sending primary school teachers to staff development programmes to encourage and motivate them for effective teaching and learning.

Education plays a critical role in the transformation and empowerment of people in any given country. The academic nature of the world we live occasioned by globalization assures of science and technology makes it necessary for government to initiate and implement staff development polices aimed at up grading the human resources in skills and knowledge with the view to coping with the challenges of modern times. Teachers' development programmes are very vital as it enhances the teacher's effectiveness in classroom instruction and general performance. It is therefore necessary for the teachers to be developed through professional programs as to be relevantwith respect to government pronouncement on qualification of teaching staff. The development programmes for teacher must be relevant to the needs of the education sector.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) provides adequate guidelines for the training and development of teachers. The manpower need of the nation lings on the

quality of the teachers and therefore it is imperative to develop them. But in practice, there are lots of challenges hindering this goal initiative of the Federal government that impede the realization of the initiative. Teachers are expected to attend in-service training, seminars, workshops regularly to improve their performance.

There is the demand that primary school teachers need to be adequately trained and retrained as to render quality services to the pupils in particular and the nation at large. But over the years, primary school teachers are observed not to have been adequately retrained and developed while in service. This amount to total neglect and treating of primary education with levity. And at times they are denied promotion and their increment allowances aren't also paid as at when due, this situation frustrates the effectiveness of these teachers which invariably affects the quality of teaching and learning in the school. This paper therefore x-rayed the challenges and proffer solutions to these problems.

The Concept of Teachers' Professional Development/Training

Teachers competence on the job is not only acquired through formal education but also through experience gained from school environment through the acquisition of specific skill and knowledge on the job training and development. The two terms are used interchangeably in this paper.

Adeleke (2000), defined training as a planned process to modify attitude knowledge, skill and behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective behaviour through an activity or range of activities.

Cole (2002) in his position sees training as any learning activity which is directed toward the acquisition of specific knowledge and skills for the purpose of an occupations or risk.

Sotunde, Essien and Osibanjo (2006) defined training as the systematic development of the attitude, knowledge, skill and behaviour pattern required by an individual in order to perform adequately in a given task or job.

However, staff development training refers to the general activities designed by the organization in other to improve staff skills, knowledge attitude and general behaviour for effective performance.

Staff development could be either by individual or organizationally motivated but the fact remains that every staff development programme should be articulated, planned, financed, implemented and monitored. No wonder Borle (2011) sees staff development/training as a systematic approach which involves sequence of activities commencing with establishment of policy and the resources to sustain it followed by the assessment of needs for which appropriate training is provided and ending with some form of evaluation and feedback.

From the foregoing it can be deduced that the school system is a critical system where the development of staff should be paramount. There is need for secondary school teachers to be developed through workshops, seminars, conferences and in-

service programmes. This means that teachers training and development are not merely social activities but an academic demand that involves mental preparedness and alertness on the part of teachers, hence the whole exercise will be futile if the teachers do not see it as motivational and capable of improving their performance.

Types of Staff Development Programmes.

It is known that teaching is a kind of humanitarian service which cannot be quantified monetarily considering the kind role teachers play in molding the younger generation. It becomes pertinent to note that teachers training and development will enhance the acquisition of ideas, knowledge, skills and experience in carrying out their prescribed roles.

➤ **Lectures, Workshops, seminars and Conferences**

They are effective teacher development methods, which involve the presentation of papers by resource persons, scholars and experts in their various educational areas. They examine new techniques, methods, concepts as they affect teaching and learning for higher productivity.

Seminars and workshops are short time duration discussion by more experienced professionals where questions and answers are allowed for better understanding and clarification because no body is a repository of all knowledge. Workshop Seminars and Conferences provides opportunities and keeps the participants abreast of current issues theories, techniques activities in other organizations .

It also gives the participants the opportunities to learn and grow by doing, because these skills are acquired through exposing the teachers to mental brainstorming on modern development not only in subject areas but also in management techniques.

➤ **On-the-job training-** Igwe in Borle (2011) opined that on the job training are those professional development activities in which one engages on after initial certification. It is integral part acquired by an individual while in service. Sandwich programmes mounted by some tertiary institutions that offer educational courses during holidays is a good example of on-the-job training.

➤ **Off-the-job Programme-** The teachers are allowed to undertake some studies on full time. The staff in most cases forfeit his or her salaries for the period of the study. The staff in question will source for fund elsewhere until the programme or training is completed.

➤ **Induction courses –** This refers to the orientation organize for the newly employed teachers by the ministry of education in collation with the state education board. For instance in 2013, the Rivers state government employed about 13,000 teachers and such programme was organized to improve on the quality of teaching.

Reasons for Teachers' Training and Development

Broadly speaking, the reason for teachers training and development is to improve performance. Enaohwo (2001) itemized a number of reasons for staff training and development.

- To correct certain deficiencies exhibited at the time of appointment
- To enable staff to face the challenges resulting from innovation.
- To enable the teachers acquire higher qualifications for greater responsibilities and status within the school system.
- To enable non-professional teachers to professionalized.
- To retrain and update the professionals ability and competence of the non-graduate teachers without disrupting the normal system.

It is important that teachers are trained and developed as to enhance their performances which would also lead to good academic performance on the part of the students who receive the quality teaching, because teachers effectiveness would result to quality output.

Challenges of Teachers Training and Development

It is observed that government has consistently challenged teachers to update their knowledge through the acquisition of additional qualification. The following problems of staff training and development are identified in the paper thus.

- There is no positive reinforcement after training. It is relatively easy to provide opportunity to gain wider experience but at the same time no promotion to higher position is attached to it, therefore the teachers see it as mere training without financial benefit at the completion of the programme.
- Some of the programmes are not properly planned, hence to ascertain its effectiveness is a problem on its own.
- Non-applicability of staff development experience to employees needs and job situation. There are some workshop and seminars that teachers attend which does not have direct link to the teachers areas of specialization and as such cannot enhance the teachers performance.
- Lack of motivation on the part of the government. Some teachers who may have spent money, time, energy to complete the staff training and development programme may not be even promoted and those that are promoted are not also paid. Non implementation of promotion arrears and increments to the programme. It is observed that in River State, teachers who were promoted since 2013, are yet to received the incremental salary based on their current ranks. Yet some of them are in various teachers development programmes, where resources are expanded. This situation demoralizes the intended staff who may want to go for such programmes. Hence some of the teachers see it as self sponsored programme without any financial benefits.

- Most administrators do not see the need for any staff development so long as the staff can carry out their current job well, as if there is no room for improvement.
- Politics has infected into the academic industry where appointment of academic administrators are based on God fatherism (Nwiyi, 2003). In his view, the school heads, principals and even the tertiary institution heads are now appointed based on political affiliation of the staff concerned. The ruling government determines who heads the educational sectors at all levels, whether qualified or not. This situation does not go down well as mediocre are given responsibilities that is above their intellectual capacities and performance very poor. Hence they do not see anything good in recommending and sending their staff for training and development programmes.

The Way Forward

Based on the challenges discussed above the paper therefore suggest the way forward as follows.

- The government should formulate policies that will consider the development of primary school teachers as their first priority in the scheme of things because of its importance as the foundation of other educational systems.
- In-service training, workshops, conferences seminars and other refresher courses should be continuously organized for both rural and urban primary school teachers as to boast their ego in “talking-teaching” profession.
- Promotion attractive incentives should be given to primary school teachers immediately after in-service training as to motivate them and encourage intended staff.
- Appointment of school heads and academic administrators should be devoid of all kinds of politics that will negatively affect the effective administration of the schools, hence appointment of school heads should be based on merit for effective administration of schools.

Conclusion

Staff development is very vital for high productivity in every organization. the education industries as the foundation of all other sectors as a matter of urgency need to be funded adequately to accommodate teachers professional development programmes for effective teaching and learning. This is very important because the higher the quality of teachers, the higher their productive (students).

Therefore teachers at the primary schools should regularly be sent for staff development programmes and incentive should also be given to them to encourage them to put their best in this noble teaching profession.

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