ENHANCING TEACHING AND LEARNING SKILLS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS THROUGH CLUSTER SCHOOLS MODEL: A CASE STUDY OF ADAVI LOCAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION AUTHORITY, KOGI STATE

Victor Ochoche Adaji

Abstract

Teaching demands a continuous development of knowledge and ability because primary education in particular is rapidly changing, requiring a constant effort on the part of the teacher to keep pace. It is to this effect, the paper seeks to examine the usefulness of cluster schools model as strategy for transformation in teaching skills in the, Nigerian primary schools. The study adopted research design. The subjects consisted of (200) Two Hundred Teachers drawn from (10) Ten Primary Schools. The data obtained were analyzed using simple percentage and mean deviation. This paper also examine the factors which facilitate teacher’s interest for promoting cluster, school model in Adavi Local Government Education Authority of Kogi state. To carry out the investigation of this study three basic research questions were posed and answered. The findings of this study reveals that the cluster school model of teacher professional development helps primary school teacher to improve his level of competence for dealing with teaching skills and that a good teacher training program is the key to the accomplishment of educational goals. Among others, it is recommended that the government should take increasing interest in the context of what was offered in this cluster schools model and that teaching is a vocation which demands the right attitude and motivation.

Key Words: Professional development, short coming of cascade and cluster school model.

Excellence in the teaching profession demands increasing one’s knowledge in order to cope with the problems of education as they unfold. There are number of ways through which a teacher can improve on his education. He can return to the campus for further studies in his particular subject or participate in the cluster school models for professional development.

The grade two colleges and colleges of education train teachers mainly for the primary schools but such trained teachers can still improve on their specialist training by utilizing the various professional avenue open to them. A good teacher should consider how he will broaden his knowledge and widen his experience after graduation. Those who for one reason or another, cannot return to university may choose to participate actively in the cluster schools model. In some cases, it does not lead to any formal qualification but the experience gained is valuable.

The purpose of further professional development in Basic education to teachers, besides the fact that it will further enhances their professional status and improves their financial fortunes, is that it also provides affords the opportunities for a exchange of ideas by competent scholars. They may by it, gain fresh insight into old problems in teaching and catch up on recent development in the teaching profession.

Awoniyi (1979) endorsed that teachers are the product of schools, but good schools cannot function without good teacher’s therefore it is inevitable that the government take increasing interest in the content of what should be offered in the cluster schools model. Whatever, the profession, there is always the need for training to create an awareness of the problems which arise in a particular profession and to improve on the level of competence for dealing with such problems. Cluster teacher professional support is a product of the teacher reform process and is specifically aimed at non-conventional mode of providing in service refresher training for teachers. It emanates from new method of training teacher practiced generally. Teachers are brought together from the various participating schools under the guidance of a mentor to develop and generate ideas on the best ways they could facilitate learning. However, the number of issues to be considered will vary from one cluster centre to another and other contextual, issues which might not have been anticipated during
training. This approach encourages teachers to work as a team through opportunities to share teaching and learning experiences with other teachers in their own locality. The purpose of this cluster professional support approach is to afford teachers the opportunity of a continuous on the job thereby enhancing the quality output in the teacher and learning process. (UBE 2013). This issue of teacher’s inability to perform in the classroom as custodian of standard inspired this study. This study therefore seeks to find out if the new approach to training teachers being practiced in the state could help address this problem of teaching in Primary School.

Short coming of the cascade teacher training

In the past, the teacher professional development model used in training education teachers is the cascade method. Our past experience indicates that the cascade type failed to accomplish the main objectives, because it lacks the necessary support by the education managers and policy implementers.

Another weakness of this method is that it is expert driven in that a desk-bond specialist usually transmits and impacts abstract information to teacher, thus encouraging the negative passive learning models.

The method is also adhoc in content and rarely provides a comprehensive learning programme for teachers. Also, the trainings were conducted in very artificial circumstances outside teachers environment with no appropriate relation to their current practice. All these call for the adoption of the cluster schools model.

For cluster schools model to be a catalyst for teacher professional development in basic education, it must be purposeful and relevant to primary school teachers. This will in long run lead to effective teaching and learning in primary schools. Okanjo (2000) posits that “the education offered must be seen to help the individual push the society further the path towards greater freedom and social justice”. This implies that cluster schools models as an instrument for transforming teaching and learning, should train teachers for effective service delivery through continuous teacher professional development.

Statement of the Problem

It is very sad to see cobwebs on the books of many teachers after graduation from training college. The teacher is a leader, many people will turn to him for assistance with socio-educational problem. If a teacher is to be respected, he must keep abreast of all latest development to education and the social-political development around the society.

There are perceived inadequacies at the basic education and these manifest in several ways including that some teachers have the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) which is the minimum requirement to teach in the primary schools, the non professional graduate teachers also have their degrees or diplomas in non Education areas yet they are employed to teach in the basic schools; some teachers who possess NCE were trained to teach non-basic education subjects, such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography, Statistics e.t.c. hence they are not qualified to teach basic education subjects, teachers who posses NCE and were trained to teach specific basic education subjects are found teaching all the subjects in the primary school classes assigned to them and most of the primary school teachers have never had the opportunity to update their knowledge and skills, since leaving school and entry into the primary school teaching due to incessant strike action or other factors. They are therefore not current in terms of reforms in education policies.

A teacher’s responsibilities are many and varied. It is to those effect that the cluster schools model is a necessity for the basic education teachers. In any formal learning situation, the teacher is a key figure, guiding the pupils and providing leadership where necessary. But the responsibility of the teacher extends beyond management. He has to be actively involved in all the issues which affect the school, aware of any educational developments in the country. A good teacher is always prepared to accept change and also initiate it. He is an innovator, bringing useful change to the purpose and practice of education.

Onukaogu (2001:184) further agreed that those assigned to teach reading in nursery and elementary schools were never taught reading and are not aware that reading is a sophisticated discipline that cannot be handled by those who are not aware of what it is. In line with the above
statement, Onukaogu (2005) observed that the quality of some teachers of reading in various primary schools is not impressive. The problem is thus, both the teachers and school administrators who are expected to increase their knowledge but who seems not to be prepared.

**Research question**

In this study the following questions were answered.

1. What are the academic qualifications of primary school teachers in the Adavi Local Government Education Authority of Kogi State.
2. What benefits would be derived from participating in cluster schools models.
3. What factors may hinder the effective utilization of functional cluster school model in your locality.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

This study was a descriptive survey design using the questionnaire techniques.

**The population for the study:**

Two Hundred (200) Teachers were purposely selected from Ten (10) Primary Schools in Adavi Local Government Area.

**Sampling and Sampling Technique**

A random sampling technique was used to select two hundred (200) primary school teachers, drawn from Ten (10) Primary Schools.

**Instrument for Data Collection**

A researcher – designed questionnaire was used as the instrument in this study. It was entitled “Prospect and challenge of cluster schools model in Kogi State”

**Procedure for Data Collection**

The researcher sought for the permission of the education secretary and Head of Statistics of Adavi Local Government Area. The questionnaire was administered to the teachers during a cluster schools meeting and collected the same day.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

The research questions, the data analysis and results were answered using the percentage.

**Results and Discussion**

**Research question 1**

What are the academic qualification of primary school teachers and their years of service in Adavi Local Government Education Authority.

**Years of service and qualification.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS OF SERVICE</th>
<th>ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21 Years</td>
<td>NCE</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>B.ED</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Years</td>
<td>B.A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Years</td>
<td>B.SC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Years</td>
<td>Bsc.ED</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in Table 1 shows that the bulk of teachers were NCE teachers who have spent twenty one years above in service close to the peak of their career without additional educational qualification, cluster
schools model for teacher professional development thus will enhance their knowledge without additional qualification.

Research question 2:
What benefit would be derived from participating in cluster schools model.
Table (2) Benefits that would be derived by the participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The recognition of the values and the potential capability of sharing experience and expertise among teachers</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To acquire ideas, skills and knowledge</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Enhance efficiency and effectiveness in teaching</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>It will broaden the scope of lesson plan</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>To keep abreast with modern technological development</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Attainment of professional advancement</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Become more skilled and knowledgeable in teaching profession</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Meet definite teaching needs and effective classroom management</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teacher mentoring process is by experts in education</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Motivation provided in form of payment</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Programme supported by a variety of teaching learning materials</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 1027  M = 93.4%  N = 73  M = 66%

The data in table 2 reveal that eleven (11) of the items received positive responses from the respondents while item one and eight received the highest positive responses from the respondents. Therefore the respondent agreed that the recognition of the values and the potential capability of sharing experience among expertise and meeting definite teaching needs and effective classroom management had tremendous impact on the lives of the (teacher) participants. However they envisaged that their constant participation in the cluster schools model, thus depends on the recognition of the values and the potential capability of sharing experiences and effective service delivery. Aruma (2006) rightly put it “The interest of the participants in literacy for professional development and job security should be considered in the changing world of work. Recently the new SUBEB chairman in Kogi State reiterated the need for teachers constant training programme to keep them abreast with current education reforms.

The response below 93.4% formed an interesting contrast to the assessment of the benefits of cluster school model to the participants as perceived in the society.

Research question 3
What in your opinion are the difficulties which affect proper utilization of participatory cluster schools model in your centre.
Table 3: Difficulties that may hinder proper utilization of cluster school model

Knowledge Review Volume 34 No 1, May, 2016: ISSN 1595-2126
The data in table 3 reveal that all the items received positive responses from the respondents. Therefore, the respondents agreed that all the ten (10) items militate against participation in cluster schools model while items one and nine received highest responses, i.e. that inadequate facilities and inability of the participants to cope with noisy environment at the training units constitute a major barrier to the participants. Mean score below 69.7% indicates weak support to the difficulties which affect proper utilization of participatory cluster schools model. The responses of the respondents in item three (3) of 18% reveal that payment paid at the centre was not adequate. Therefore attention should be given to the allowance of the participants in the subsequent cluster schools model.

**Conclusion**

From the finding of this study, the role of cluster schools model of teacher professional development will enhance primary school teachers performance and overcome their persistent poor service delivery in core subjects. Again, the study has demonstrated that constant training of teachers through cluster meeting will keep them abreast with educational reform.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that cluster teachers meeting is provided to primary school teachers on regular basis for the purpose of sharing ideas on the teaching strategies. Allowance that is usually provided for the cluster teachers meeting should be reviewed to serve as a motivation to the participants. Also, strategy to monitor the payment at each cluster centre should be developed to tackle issues of irregularities. In organizing the cluster teachers meeting, adequate learning resources should be made available for school teachers to share and try out ideas, hence, it involves group activities.

**References**

Victor Ochoche Adaji


Bude, U & Greenland J. (1983) In-service Education and training of Primary school teachers in Anglophone Africa Badeu- Badeu, Germany Deutsche, stifting for international Entwicklung


