

THE NEEDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN NIGERIA THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The educational system is a human endeavour to achieve specific educational goals. In order to achieve these goals, the system must harness and articulate a number of resources at its disposal. These resources include finance, materials, machines and human beings. The human resources include the teachers who are involved in the teaching and learning process. These teachers constitute the active ingredients who gather and activate the other resources towards the accomplishment of the educational goals. This paper however discussed the challenges generating needs for in-service training and professional development of teachers who are to carry out the job of teaching and learning. It was concluded from literature that the educational system was not meeting the needs of the increasing student population because the visibility study was not properly made. Suggestions and recommendations were made on how to improve, so as to cope with the current technological trends in the global world, and be able to effect changes in the teaching and learning process, and above all be able to adopt new innovations and transformations that is required in the teaching process.

In the present dispensation, there is an increasing awareness of the relationship between the quality of education available to the present students and future quality of life in Nigeria. Reports made by researchers like Ogudo and Dashe (2010) points to the fact about the danger of continuing with the same educational pattern and the urgent need to improve substantially

the educational outcome of students. Therefore, there are strong need for the appropriate focusing on what exist, the expectation and better ways of Improving through professionalism.

No country wants to be left behind globally now and that is the singular reason why they are working hard to meet the expectation of its

student population. Nigeria is one of the countries that her education is expected to grow faster in terms of technological breakthrough. Their expectation notwithstanding discrepancies exist in its methods of professional development. Teachers are said to be the central factor to the achievement and maintenance of relevance, the educational system of any country revolves around its teachers.

Achuonye, (2007) observed that all the activities of any educational system are initiated and determined by the staff that makes up the institution. Fafunwa and Lawal (2003:12) noted that Nigeria teacher is to cope adequately with the monumental task that lies ahead of him, he has to be well trained for his job. He must be willing to enter into the spirit of the new age, willing to share new information and skills with his fellow teachers, seek more knowledge on his own initiative and above all, be flexible and willing to experiment and not be afraid of failure. These educationists further emphasized that since the business of education is teaching and learning, teachers are the only drivers. It should be noted that in Nigeria professional development cannot go on as it should because of some problems.

Among the UNESCO proposed priorities for action to improve the quality of education of all young people, is the need to “reaffirm the central role of teachers and trainers and to reinforce their professionalism both through their

heightening status as well as through pre-and-in-service training with a view to better preparing them to handle the new demands placed upon them by young people and the society at large” (UNESCO, 2004:2). This decision was reached at the 47th session of the UNESCO International Conference on Education (Geneva, 8-11 September 2004).

Okebukola (2006) had pointed out that lack of in-service training of teachers had contributed to the inability of teachers to practice teaching as it should be. Adeyanju (2006) registered that the importance of teacher education is ultimately and objectively the improvement of education in its totality; which also leads to the production of academically and professionally sound highly motivated and dynamic breed of teachers. Teachers development should not only prepare them but should be a type of training opportunities that will enable them to acquire knowledge, competence and skills to explore, investigate, experiment, create, practice and innovate socio-economic development and education excellence.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004:39) emphatically stated that no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers. Teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. The training and production of the manpower required for the attainment of the above

objective should therefore be framed on the quality and quantity of teachers.

Ivowi (2008) sees professional development as an act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job. To professionalize is to bring a person to a desired state or standard of efficiency through instruction and practice. Since it is so stated, they observed that the extent of professional development determined teacher's productivity or ability to respond to the needs of the students, and the need for an enabling environment to be created by the operators or managers of the system.

If Nigeria is actually interested in tackling the challenges of technological development and globalization, it must be prepared to keep the teaching force informed of the current demands of the educational system through professional development.

Meaning and Aims of Professional Development

Professional development is used to describe many activities as it relates to staff training within education system in order to achieve its goals and aims.

Hammond (1990) defined professional development as activity of staff training intended to improve the capacity of staff to fill specific roles particularly in relation to teaching. Professional development is a means of

knowing the immediate and future needs of individual staff to further their education and gain job satisfaction, career prospects and that of the institution. It involves supporting academic work and plans and the implementation of programmes of staff activities designed for harmonious satisfaction of those needs of the students.

Ihiegbulam (2008) states that "professional development is concerned broadly to include any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understanding or performance in present or future roles of the industrial staff".

This definition is in line with the view of Adekeye (2005) who had also described professional development as a way of integrating new staff with those already in service or promoted employees to their new positions. They noted that professional development involve planned learning experience designed to bring about changes on the individual knowledge, attitudes or skills. It entails systematic acquisition of skills concept or attitudes which will result in improved performance of functions of the teacher.

It is observed that professional development makes a teacher productive, creative and skillful as well as enhance their efficiency. In all institutions, the aim of professional development.

1. Increase productivity;
2. Heighten employee's morale;
3. Reduce supervision;
4. Increase organizational stability and flexibility;
5. Prepare for advancement;
6. Confront challenges that will enhance societal growth;
7. Contain technological growth in the system;
8. Satisfy political and legal obligations, and
9. Satisfy social goals.

Furthermore, development is defined by Harrison (2000) as learning experiences of any kind, whereby individuals and groups acquire enhanced knowledge, skills, values or behaviours. It takes the form of learning activities that prepare people to exercise wider or increased responsibilities. Teachers being the core implementers of the school curriculum need to regularly update their knowledge so as to keep pace with the rapid changing society.

Considering the growing society which is dynamic in nature, there is the need to make room for changes that comes up frequently. Obviously, the production of any employee is dependent upon their expertise acquired during the period of training either before entering the service or acquired during service.

Supper's theory is in line with the view of vocational development which sees development of vocation as a

continuous process. Supper's theory further assumes that vocational competence and situations changes with time. The theory identified four major characteristics of professional development, namely;

- i) Growth
- ii) Exploration
- iii) Establishment

From the above, it could be noted that professional development provides room for new innovation, growth, transformation, ability to experiment, adapt, establish and maintain the objectives of the educational system. It could also be concluded that the purpose of professional development is to equip teachers in the methodology application of subject contents and attitude that will enable them to respond to changing priorities of the teaching and learning process and that of teaching profession. Based on the above view, professional development should be a continuous exercise for teachers so as to enable them achieve the goals of teaching, since its goal is to ensure learning. Professional development should respond to the need of the learners through instruction. This is the only way by which the problems of the educational system could be confronted and new innovations and transformation effected.

The Need for Innovations and Transformation

The need of the teeming population of students in Nigeria is on

the teachers and the society. It is equally this need that generates pressure for the need for professional development of teachers, most especially in the primary schools in Nigeria.

Training and re-training of teachers is in the ethics of the teaching profession. This will improve methods, skills and procedures to enhance their out-put.

Akpabio (2000) and Kida (2000) agree that there is need to retrain new and inexperienced teachers as well as those who have been in service for years as this would help them to learn new teaching techniques for enhanced performance.

What are the Essential Elements? Instructions

For the teachers to meet the needs of increased students' population, they must be current on the information regarding methods of teaching and understanding the concept, skills and attitudes required. It has to be for all the teachers irrespective of what level you belong, whether you are in the public or private sector. This has become very important because of the establishment of various new schools built by the rich, where teachers practice teaching with the use of modern technologies in order to teach the students on individual basis, since their population is ever-increasing. For the teacher to meet the needs of an ever-increasing student population,

certainly, new methods or techniques are required to accommodate these needs of each of them.

Teaching involves the teacher, students and administration. This process has to be followed so as to realize the need to adopt a democratic method, group method, assignment method, and activity method in teaching. This could result in adjustment of time, re-arrangement of classrooms, use of public address, use of modern teaching materials by the teacher. However, all students can learn, because the differentiating factor in students' achievement is the appropriateness and effectiveness of the instructional experience to which they are exposed. That, notwithstanding, the government also have her own problems which hinges on inadequate infrastructure, inadequate furniture in the classrooms, inadequate trained teachers, etc. in the educational system, and this calls for strong need for professional development in the areas of instructions. This also calls for a review of the curriculum, making it more responsive to the needs of the society and students. This paves way for the teachers to continuously pursue innovations such as;

- a) School – ICT or school internet connect
- b) Television broadcasting
- c) Website based learning
- d) Educational games and stimulations
- e) Traditional oriented instructions

- f) Team teaching
- g) Computer assisted instructions

Evidently, these skills and techniques mentioned above can be acquired through professional development. It is also vital to note that these techniques and skills could be adapted to a unique situation of the each school while at the same time preparing the teachers for the global challenges of this profession. From what we already have on ground, professional training of teachers is very important in Nigeria, especially those in the Primary Schools. The present teachers in the primary schools cannot be allowed to teach in other countries such as United States of America, except they undertake a training programme there.

This shows that there are inequalities in terms of knowledge and ability to perform common task by all the teachers. Teaching is a knowledge-centred activity in which the ability of the teacher matter a lot especially in ensuring the assimilation of instruction as an evidence of change character, behaviour and learning of the student. Therefore, the professional development of the teacher is very vital in the educational system.

The Effects of Shared Responsibilities and Collaborative Attitude through Professional Development

In recent times, it has be presumed that schools of tomorrow will become centres of learning, serve a dramatic change for students and adopt a

new innovative and instructional goals. To achieve the above situation, it requires a change policy by the government to enable new ways of organizing and managing both the people and the organization itself. In this case, the restructuring requires administrators and teachers to develop new strategies for working together on issues bothering on allocation, fiscal and material resources, uses of time, space students' assignments, curriculum and instructional materials. This means that teachers will share their role of teaching with others, that teachers and administrators will collaborate with each other to learn that parents come into the school to learn, teach and watch their children, that members of the community also share their expertise in the school. Through this way, they will understand some of the external influences that affect the students' performance and its implications for instructions. Furthermore, this type of collaboration enables schools and community to effectively address the non-educational needs of the students. Their families and parents will also understand how decisions are taken in the educational system; all these will help in bringing new innovation and transformation in the educational system.

Avenues for Professional Development for the 21st Century in Nigeria

This paper focuses on professional development of teachers in

service. Obviously, it has been noted that the training of teachers is very important in order to bring in new innovations and transformations through them.

However, there are professional delivery systems for serving teachers emanating from the Ministry of Education; but the implementation process is the problem, because it has not been very effective. Teachers most of the time embark on professional development on their own without the approval of the Ministry of Education, and sometimes, the ministry approve for some people without considering their area of specialization and the system.

The delivery systems for the professional development in the 21st century are:

- i) **Technology:** This can be used to bring innovations which can transform the performance of teachers through the use of technological teaching materials such as the internet connect, website based learning, radio and television broadcasting, computer assisted instructions, etc. These technologies can be used as the tools for professional development and adapted to the circumstance of each school.
- ii) **Conference/Workshop/Seminars:** This can be used as a delivery system for professional development. It could be done through consultancy by experienced

professionals when it comes to presentation of papers during service or teaching on workshop and conferences regarding new methods of teaching.

- iii) **In-service Training:** It is a process of developing aptitude, knowledge, skills, attitudes, proper methods required of a teacher so as to perform effectively within the expected level required. This in-service is the prerogative of the teachers on the job and the duration and selection in the duties of the organizers of the set-up or organization to say who should be involved or not. It can be used as a delivery system for professional development of teachers in the 21st century.
- iv) **Research Publications:** This is a process in which teachers carry out research and are able to test and document their findings after observation, through form of Journals, articles, magazines and books. These can serve as a tool for professional development of teachers who will in turn train the students.
- v) **Sabbatical Leave:** This is another process through which professional development can take place. The teacher moves from his institution to another one on permission in one year. There, the teacher will be

engaged in research teaching and learning process in that school.

- vi) **Study Leave:** This is usually an organized study for the staff while in service. This is given to a staff in service who have worked for a number of years in the organization. This is another method by which professional development could be practiced.

Advantages of Professional Development of Teachers in Nigeria

As education is dynamic, it is important that teachers are prepared for this change through regular training. The needs of the students and the society should be top most in priority. If this is done, definitely the society, the teachers and the students will benefit in the following areas:

1. Integration of professional development with the school system: There is the need to integrate the professional development into the school system. Issues of access to teachers will no longer be a problem through the use of appropriate programmes which will enlist for training as at when necessary.
2. Professional development will assist in expanding the knowledge of the teachers. This will help them to respond to the realities of their time in terms of practices.
3. Professional development will help in bringing all the teachers to the same level in terms of knowledge whether you are in the rural, urban, private or public schools. They will undergo the same pattern of training and exposure. It will enable teachers learn from other teachers the existing current contents and methods of teaching.
4. Most times, teachers' attitudes and beliefs do not conform to the favourable growth of the educational system. There is the need for reorientation of the existing teachers and other who share the same responsibilities of teaching in the educational system.
5. Professional development creates opportunities for self-renewal of teachers who had participated, therefore, it is like a continuation of experience for those who participated. Like student teachers need to be involved in everyday search for knowledge that will assist in their growth. Teachers who are competent in what they are doing are more likely to create similar, supportive and nurturing environment for their students. Self renewal and lifelong education can be done through conferences, workshops and visit to other schools.
6. Collaborating with and contributing to the growth of others can be done

through the assistance of professional colleagues in conferences, seminars and workshops organized by the educational management. This gives room for reinforcement for continuing growth and development which comes from membership in a community of learners with their professional colleagues.

Conclusion

This paper provided a comprehensive review on the need for professional development through the delivery system and outlined the benefits of professional development to the educational system. It is noted that through professional development, educators can access carefully the purpose, roles, structure and organization of schools in terms of the increasing population of students and the society they serve. Professional development helps the schools to identify stale methods and adopt new ones for the growth of the educational system. However, more sophisticated professional development programme is needed in Nigeria, if we have to improve the level of students' performance and be able to effect reasonable innovations and transformation in the educational system; and the society at large. There is the need for a new ethic for professional development goals and new innovations that has to confront educational processes especially the way the students learn.

Recommendations

From the literature review, the author outline the need for professional development of teachers, thereby make these recommendations;

- i) That the target of professional development should be to identify and adopt new and more appropriate goal for the development of teachers
- ii) That local realities be adopted in terms of development of teaching materials and teaching methods
- iii) Government should ensure that organizations and individuals should see professional development as their responsibility, and it should be an integrated continuum of experience.

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