Teachers' Professional Development: A Panacea to Quality Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Teachers are important factor in educational development. The quality of teachers determines the quality of their output. The incidences of unqualified teachers that permeate all levels of education in Nigeria has constitute treat to quality education in Nigeria. These among others have necessitated the need for consistent Teachers' Professional Development (TPD). Consistent development and re-training of teachers will improve capability of teachers for quality education delivery. It is the concern of this paper to consider the concept of teachers' professional development: a panacea to a quality education. Literature was reviewed on concepts of TPD and quality education. Roles of TPD in the attainment of quality education were discussed. Suggestions among others were made that regular TPDs should be organised for teachers based on the teachers' skills need. Also, motivation such as incentives and promotion could be attached to TPD to promote participation and commitment.

Keywords: Teaching profession, Quality Education, Teachers' Professional
Development

Introduction

In any developing country, there is an ever increasing need for re-training of teachers in order to facilitate efficient and effective implementation of curriculum for teaching productivity and functional Nigerian educational system. The rate of academic development and the increasing demand with regards to knowledge-based economy and technology advancement require a constantly and regularly update of teaching workforce. Thus, teachers that are professionally trained and have acquired required skills are expected to expose to recurrent training due to the changing in job content and environment. To meet these requirements, teacher development must become a life-long process. Also, effective and efficient curriculum planning and implementation involves professionally trained teachers because they constitute the vital force as part of the implementers of the curriculum at every stage of the educational programme. Therefore, teachers are important factor in educational development. The quality of teachers determines the quality of their output. As such, no

educational system can be consolidated without the development of the teachers that will implement the programme. The imperative role of teachers' professional development programmes in the attainment of quality education cannot be under estimated. Teachers are the nut and driver of any education system because the school cannot be better than their teachers. Akpan, Ntukidem, Ekpiken, & Etor (2009) asserted that, it is upon teachers' quality, devotion to teaching and their continuous development that the quality of education can be tested. This implies that teachers should be well prepared for their duties through regular and appropriate teacher development programmes.

The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004); section 8, stated that "in-service training shall be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education and shall also take care of inadequacies… p 65". The policy laid emphasis on the significance of in-service training and further stated that "efforts towards the improvement of quality education at the primary and secondary levels shall include regular in-service training programmes for teachers and head teachers…p. 70". These two policy statements draw attention to the necessity of consistent development of teachers for improving the Nigerian educational system that will enhance the quality of education offered to learners at all levels. Therefore, it should be denoted at this point that the education of teachers is not delimited to the training at the college, but a continuous and life-long process. Therefore, it is hoped that effective management of teachers through provision of funds, redistribution of teachers among schools, and re-training will not only improve the quality of education and consolidate the educational system; but that the curriculum for the Nigerian educational system will be effectively and efficiently implemented towards the fulfillment of educational goals and objectives.

Quality education is significantly related to the quality of its teachers which has a direct link to the quality of development programmes given to them. In other words, the quality of graduates of any school or educational system is predicated on the total quality of its teacher (World Bank, 2003; Ijaiya, Alabi & Fasasi, 2011; Ijaiya, 2012, Awodiji & Ijaiya, 2019). It was stated that all forms of development begin with capacity building quality education can only be attained if there is investment in human capital development (Awodiji, 2018). The acquisition of skills, knowledge, right attitude and its productive utilisation are germane to actualisation of quality education.

The continuous yearning for quality education in Nigeria as called for critical examination of the way forward. Stakeholders in the society have been complaining on the quality of the graduates of Nigerian educational system. Employers of labour have lost confidence in the output of our education whereby, conducting series of test and training for the applicants and

graduates before employment. Also, the state of insecurity such as insurgency, kidnapping, robbery among others in the nation had been linked to the fall in the quality of our education. To this end, teachers has been at the receiving end for all that befallen the education of the nation.

Moreover, for a developing nation like Nigeria to join the league of advanced nations, especially in this knowledge-based economy and global competitiveness demand for regular training and retraining of teachers who are the major driver of our educational system.

In recent years, some literature have illuminated on the intensity of teachers' quality in Nigeria. Of particular interest is the situation in Kaduna State. Durosaro (2013) reported that a total of 1,599 teachers selected from across the state were given primary four (4) tests in mathematics and basic literacy. One of them scored 75%, 250 scored between 50% and 74% and 1,300 scored below 25%. The Chairman of the State House of Assembly Committee on education, Yunusa Muhammed said out of 36,000 teachers in the State, 15,000 are not qualified. Similarly, in Kwara State, an aptitude and capacity test was organised for a total of 19,125 teachers in the State's public schools in 2008. Out of these 2,628 were university graduates. The teachers were given tests that were designed originally for primary four (4) pupils in English and Mathematics. At the end of the exercise, only seven teachers out of the 19,125 crossed the minimum aptitude and capacity threshold. Only one out of the 2,628 graduate teachers passed the test, 10 graduates scored outright zero. The teachers fared worse in literacy assessment which recorded only 1.2 percent pass rate. In 2006 as reported by Abbas & Abdulwahab (2017), the former Minister of Education, Oby Ezekwesili said that 40 percent of teacher in service were not qualified. Also, Aminu Sharehu, director general of NTI, in line with the Minister's statement said that over 80% of teachers in Northern Nigeria are not qualified due to lack of motivation. The recent threats of some governors to sack incompetent teachers might not be unconnected with their apparent lack of quality. For example, in July 2009, Plateau State government sacked about 6000 teachers. Eboyi State in June, 2010 suspended 26 teachers. Imo State government in November 2012 also threatened to sack any teacher found to be incompetent. Governor Adams Oshiomole recently sacked some teacher for dereliction of duty. The incidence of unqualified teachers permeates all levels of education in Nigeria and this can be attributed to trend of educational change. Most teachers are only familiar with outdated curriculum and policies which are no longer in vogue. The aptitude test conducted for teachers is not supposed to condemn them as unqualified but rather to help discover the areas where they can be helped to improve upon.

Teaching profession

Teaching profession has originated from the social and economic changes that have arisen in societies and can be described as Teaching profession could be described as "a professional

occupational group of education sector possessing social, cultural, economic, scientific and technological dimensions" (Erden, 2007). The teaching profession for that matter is essentially based on knowledge, teaching strategies, education psychology, care, ethics and general conduct."

A teacher who can be also referred as a trainer, instructor, coach, etc. is a facilitator of knowledge, skills and ability. Teachers have been likened to artists, particularly when the literature refers to the process of teaching as being an art rather than a science. A teacher is the only person who is capable of imparting knowledge and shaping the youths to the wider scope of knowledge. Teachers are capable of living and moulding the youths such that their power is paramount as they determine the fate of the society. Both teachers and parents live with the children for a long time and hence they are capable of imparting knowledge, skills and values that cannot be easily challenged by the society. The teacher is an expert who is capable of imparting knowledge that will help learners to build, identify and to acquire skills that will be used to face the challenges in life. The teacher also provides to the learners knowledge, skills and values that enhance development, (Senge, 2000). The teacher is the person who is capable of creating behavioural change in terms of cognitive, psychomotor as well as affective domain, (Mbise, 2008).

Quality Education

Quality is the backbone of sustainable education which is the catalyst for national development and progress. Quality is the fitness of a product/service relevant to its purpose (Ijaiya, 2001). Hence, quality in education should be based on teachers' input, and available infrastructural facilities in relation to output (students). The United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2002) submitted that quality education is a function of the following: Quality learners, who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to learn; Quality learning environments, that are healthy, safe, and provide adequate resources and facilities; Quality content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills; Quality processes which involve trained teachers, child-centered teaching methods, well-managed classrooms and skilful assessment approaches which facilitate learning, Quality outcomes which include knowledge, skills, and attitudes which encourage positive participation in society.

Quality education is not direct observable concept to qualify. According to the Education For All: Global Monitoring Report (EFA: GMR) (2005), the two principles characteristics most attempts to define quality in education: the first identifies learners' cognitive development as the major explicit objective of all education systems. The second emphasises education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and in nurturing creative and emotional development." (p.17). Quality education is determines by how much and how well children learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal,

social and developmental benefits. Goal 6 of the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) emphasised the need of a stimulating pedagogy. It is the teaching and learning process that brings the curriculum to life that determines what happens in the classroom and subsequently the quality of the learning outcomes. Quality in education can be regarded as the ability of educational system to meet the ever-dynamic demand, requirements and expectations of educational customers (i.e. students, teachers, parents, governments, employers and institutions) (OECD, 2012).

Teachers Professional Development Programmes

Professional development is learning to earn or maintain professional credentials such as academic degrees to formal coursework, attending conferences, and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. It has been described as intensive and collaborative, ideally incorporating an evaluative stage. There are a variety of approaches to professional development, including consultation, coaching, communities of practice, lesson study, mentoring, reflective supervision and technical assistance.

From the perspective of learning outcomes, Guskey (2002) defined Teacher Professional Development (TDP) as systematic approach of bring about change in the classroom practices of teachers, in terms of attitude, skills, knowledge and beliefs, and in the learning outcomes of students. Creemers, Kyriakides and Antoniou (2012) took a functionalist perspective and described TDP as technical processes that help teachers to provide better service to clients/students. Boddard (1992) regarded TDP as an essential aspect of quality that relates the individual teacher needs with the challenges of the job. The motivation of teachers to remain learner throughout their career underpins professional accountability and ensures responsibility.

Roles of Teachers' Professional Development in Attainment of Quality Education

Teacher professional development is an important training programme which the government should invest upon in order to enhance teachers' professional knowledge, skills and attitudes, which will ultimately improve the teaching and learning process as well as student outcomes. Little is done to promote the TDP. Even now in the twenty-first century, when so much is known about the skills and knowledge that teachers need to learn and practice in and outside of teaching, yet professional development is not of great importance. Effective developmental programmes will provide teachers with the ability to face educational change and handle various socioeconomic conditions inside and outside school. For an occupational group to be classified as a professional occupation, it is necessary that it provides services in a determined field, goes through formal training which offers expert knowledge, possesses professional culture, has admission control, possesses professional establishments and is considered as a profession by the society (Erden, 2007; Tezcan, 1996).

Teachers also are to involve themselves in self-development activities. They are expected to update their knowledge on particular subject matter so as to cope with changes. Again, teachers should be acquainted with, trained and being oriented to the new changes. This will be helpful to teachers as they will be able to design new teaching methodologies and approaches. Without in-service trainings, seminars, conferences, discussions and special trainings that offer new knowledge and skills, teachers will not be able to cope with the rapidly changing world and global competitiveness. This will have the negative implication to the pupil/students as she/he will not be able to receive relevant knowledge. Even experienced teachers confront great challenges each year, including changes in subject content, new instructional methods, advances in technology, changed laws and procedures, and student learning needs. Educators who do not experience effective professional development do not improve their skills, and student learning suffers.

Researchers have long recognised that TDP as essential to changing classroom practice, improving schools, and ameliorating pupils' learning outcomes (Borko, 2004). Professional learning often takes place in formal settings, such as professional development programmes, teaching research groups, and formal mentoring programmes (Timperley, 2011). Teachers also can learn through informal interactions that occur during peer teaching, collaborative planning, and mentoring between colleagues (Little, 2012).

Those education and training activities engaged in by primary and secondary-school teachers, following their initial professional certification, and intended mainly or exclusively to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order that they can educate children more effectively. Professional development may take place at any time-either as full-time or as part-time study-during the professional life of the teacher. It could be systematically planned work over a certain period of time leading to an advanced certificate, diploma, or higher degree. It can be initiated by the teacher or the school system, and can also be something that teachers do individually on their own and following their own interests. Sometimes researchers make a clear distinction between in-service education and professional development. In-service programme is that portion of professional development that should be publicly supported and includes a programme of systematically designed activities planned to increase the competencies, knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by school personnel in the performance of their assigned responsibilities (p.42).

The TPD are lifelong learning programmes organised for the development of teachers dynamism, effectiveness, competencies (skills, knowledge, and attitudes), and motivation in a systematic and planned way to improve their performance. Moreover, TPD can be regarded as the activities and programmes (formal or informal) exposed to to teachers to learn about

responsibilities, develop required skills and competencies necessary for the attainment of quality education (Awodiji, 2018). The TPD activities also enhance teachers to grow professionally so as to prepare themselves for advancement in the classroom and beyond (The University of Georgia, 2008, Awodiji, 2018). It is a model of developing teachers' personal and institutional skills, knowledge and abilities which include training, career development, coaching, and mentoring (Awodiji, 2018). Teachers' development programmes are the heartbeat of capital development for prudent use and sustenance of resources in the national building and institutional (Okemakinde, Adewuyi & Alabi, 2013). It is regarded as series of activities employed by any institution for the improvement of its teachers' skills, knowledge, attitude and competence. These modes are Training for Higher Qualification (THQ), continuous education, mentorship, coaching system, seminar, workshop, conference, staff exchange programme (Awodiji & Ijaiya, 2019). Teacher Professional Development Programmes cut across all activities, such as continuous educational programmes, workshops, coaching, among others, (Awodiji, 2018) which when identified and explored, has a substantial impact in changing the strength of individual teachers to perform their present assignment better (Yalokwu, 2006).

School leadership can create a learning environment at schools by helping teachers to identify their development needs, by encouraging experimentation, finding and allocating resources to support teachers' learning, and by enhancing the implementation of new learning (Thoonen, Sleegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011; Vanblaere & Devos, 2016). Continuous learning requires that we acknowledge teachers as the heart of decision-making around change—a key principle in understanding, engaging, and developing ownership in adult learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). According to Walker (2007), a positive teacher learning culture depends on the presence and alignment of three components: structures, values, and relationships. In addition, leaders must take on the role of ensuring that proper learning conditions are in place at the school in order to create a culture of learning. Here, "culture" refers to the various ways that group of people act and the beliefs that they connect to these actions (Wolcott, 2008). Forte and Flores (2014) asserted that there must be interplay between structure and culture if teachers are to learn together. Collaboration between teachers produces a number of benefits with significant impacts on their professional lives, thus playing an important role in professional teacher development strategy (Vangrieken, Dorchy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). For example, the International Survey on teaching and learning found that teachers using collaborative practices are more innovative in the classroom, have higher job satisfaction, and hold stronger self-efficacy beliefs (European Commission, 2013).

Many presumed that teacher collaboration contributes to professional development and instructional improvement (DuFour & Fullan, 2012). Research on teachers' professional development also indicates that site-based teacher teams positively influence teacher engagement in terms of new instructional practices (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). According to Borko (2004), participation and discourse practices can enhance teacher learning by supporting professional critique, reflection, and collaboration. Research also shows that teachers can be development leaders in their own schools. For instance, Alexandrou and Swaffield (2014) demonstrate that teacher leadership can facilitate broader professional development within school communities. MacBeath and Dempster (2008) present five principles for teacher leaders in their work: First, they should focus on the learning of everyone in the school. Second, they should create and sustain conditions that favour learning. Third, they should engage in explicit, transparent, and inquiry-based dialogue. Fourth, they should allow everyone to influence school operations; and fifth and finally, they should maintain internal and external accountability in order to examine how the results align with their school's goals and principles. Of course, there also are some conditions that allow teacher leadership to flourish, including professional trust (Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Louis, 2007), perceived autonomy (Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007), supportive administrators, and time and resources, such as structural and organisational assets along with space and time (Birky, Shelton, & Headley, 2006).

To this end, teachers' exposure to continuous professional development will increase their knowledge and serve as part of solutions to quality education in Nigeria. Since knowledge is not statics, teachers are to be given ample opportunities for professional development that will enhance their job performance and quality delivery and promote quality education in terms of quality graduates from educational system.

Conclusion

It is therefore conclude that the role of TDP in the attainment of quality in education cannot be compromised. Continuous teachers' development will enhance the quality of lesson delivery and consequently promote quality graduates.

Suggestions

From forgoing, it was suggested that:

- Regular TPD programmes should be organised for teachers based on the teachers' skills need.
- Motivation such as incentives and promotion could be attached to TDP to promote participation and commitment.
- Private individuals such as industry and Non-Governmental Organisation should partner with government in the professional development of the teachers.

- Teachers should be encouraged to involve in personal improvement activities such as reading, collaboration, mentoring and attendance at workshops.

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