



WHEN TEACHERS SPEAK: SENIORS SCHOOL TEACHERS PERCEPTION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN ILORIN, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

Teacher professional development is a life-long process that should last until the teacher's tenure or retirement; consequently, teacher professional development should be viewed as a continuous process. If teachers do not keep up with global developments, particularly those brought about by technology, they will be out of place in this era. Three research questions were formed to guide the conduct of this study, purposive sampling techniques were used to select five participants, and themes that emerged were perception (life-long process, teachers' needs and a way of getting new ideas), the second research question reveals the different types of professional development that the teachers attended while the last theme reveals the challenges the teacher encountered such as lack of funding, availability of the program, time constraint, transportation issue and incompetent personnel. The study concluded that the issue of professional development cannot be over-emphasized, and the following recommendation was made; teacher professional development should be made available to all teachers and not just some few privileged ones; there should be proper monitoring during the selection process so that those that are non-teachers are not selected; government should also ensure that teachers are motivated (financially) when they are going for continuing education.

Keywords: perception, professional development, teacher professional development

1. Introduction

Teacher professional development is not a one-time event, but rather a process that should continue throughout the teacher's career or until retirement; hence, it should be considered a continuous process. If teachers do not keep up with global developments, particularly those brought about by technology, they will be out of place in this era (Bernadine, 2019). Research has pointed out that to be successful; teachers need

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professional development that is a sustained, full of intensive effort to improve learning and teaching (Badri et al., 2016). In lieu of the above statement, there is increasing awareness that teachers must be carefully recruited and developed professionally throughout the course of their careers to be effective (Conley & You, 2017). Teacher professional development refers to any activities aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers by means of orientation, training and support (Geldenhuys & Oosthuizen, 2015). This form of development is likely to have an effect on attitudes, approaches and methods; this can therefore contribute to the improvement of the quality of the teaching and learning process (Avidov-Ungar, 2016; Garet et al., 2001).

Many teachers viewed professional development as necessary to fill in the gaps in the skill sets of novice teachers and to continue to develop the expertise of experienced teachers (Badri et al., 2016). Professional development is necessary to keep the teacher up-to-date due to the continuously changing practices, and needs of the student. Furthermore, the significance of quality teaching and teacher professional development (TPD) designed to promote student learning outcomes has grown in recent decades for teachers globally including Nigeria, who have faced increased pressures from accountability, high-stakes testing, and the standards movement as they are saddled with the need to promote the overall success of the students in seemingly increasing diverse classrooms (Powell & Bodur, 2019). The era we are today, the entry knowledge of teachers cannot sustain their teaching responsibilities, teachers need to be supported with regular professional development activities at regular intervals to enhance effective teaching and learning. Their attendance and participation in various professional development activities will improve their residual knowledge and empower them with varied teaching skills (Ajani, 2020).

Secondary education across the globe, inclusive of Nigeria, are vital institution in the attainment of a country's educational policy (Wilson, 2017). The Nigeria senior secondary school education takes three years both in the previous 6-3-3-4 and the current 9-3-4 system (UBE, 1999). This stage is for the students who have finished the junior secondary education program successfully and are aiming to proceed to the tertiary echelons of education. Moreover in Nigeria's philosophy of education, it is believe that (a) The exchange of ideas and people is one of education's many components, and it serves as a tool for fostering national development; (b) education fosters the worth development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for general development of the society (c) the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; (d) the acquisition of appropriate skills and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society (NPE, 2004). All this cannot be actualized if teachers are not exposed to professional development that will help in upgrading their knowledge, which will make it to be in line with the 21st century world requirement. To this end, this research is aimed to find out from the teachers their perceptions about the teachers' professional development in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state, Nigeria.

2. Statement of the problem

A teacher's role is vitally important and it is what teachers think, believe, and do in the classroom that eventually shapes the kind of learning young people get (Pedler et al., 2020). Professional development of teachers in most developing African countries especially Nigeria has not been impressively done to support and improve the teachers, the quality of these African teachers speaks about the existing or prevailing quality of education system in Africa (Ajani, 2020).

The latest policy on Nigeria's National Teachers' Education (Education, 2014) emphasized greatly on supporting and funding the continuing professional development for teachers. The sixth, seventh and eighth principles of the policy stated that 'for teachers to learn well, teacher educators must be sufficiently trained and capable of imparting and modeling desired knowledge, skills and attitudes'; 'If teachers are to stay motivated, they must have opportunities for continuing professional development, advancement, and improvement in their chosen career'; 'like all professionals, teachers must constantly upgrade their knowledge and skills if they are to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world' respectively (Education, 2014)(p14-17). However, more often than not, the lopsided implementation of policies or the total failure to effectively bring into practice already stated public reforms has hindered national development in many ways.

More so, the researcher's experience as a secondary school teacher in Ilorin metropolis Nigeria, who has undergone little to no professional experience during a career that has span 10 years prompt the idea of this study if others were in the same shoe like her. Few literatures were available as regards the issues of teachers' professional development in Nigeria secondary school especially from the perception of teachers, hence there is need for further studies.

2.1 Research questions

- 1) What are the teachers' perceptions on the need for professional development training?
- 2) What are the types of professional development that teachers participated in?
- 3) What are the challenges of teachers' professional development training in Ilorin, Nigeria?

3. Method and process

Table 1: Teachers' profile

School	Teacher (Pseudonym)	Highest Education Level	Years of Teaching
A	Mr Aro	B.Ed.	7
B	Miss Florish	M.Ed	10
C	Mrs. Ayo	B.Ed.	9
D	Mr. Uthman	B.Ed.	8
E	Mrs. Bassey	Ph.D.	12

The findings of this study were presented below.

Research question 1: What are the teachers' perceptions on the need for professional development training?

Perceptions are the thought and feeling that the participant has as it relates to their professional development experiences. The perceptions that the researcher got were; life-long process, teachers' needs, a way of getting new idea.

A. Life-long process

The participants feels that learning is an on-going process that should happened to individual throughout their entire life, this is line with the work of (Badri et al., 2016; Fang et al., 2021), they noted that teacher professional development is regarded as an essential tool for providing teachers with continual support in their teaching. Professional development should provide an important tactic for improving schools, increasing the quality of teacher, and improving student. Here is what the participants said:

"...the issue of teacher professional development cannot be over emphasize especially in teaching profession, coz I believe that learning is an ongoing, therefore teacher professional development should be a continuous process too..." Mr. Aron

Another participant also said:

"...all teachers need professional development program in all fields of knowledge... Teachers are always happy to attend such program been sponsored by government, non-governmental or in partnership of the two bodies." Miss Flourish

B. Teacher's needs

This implies the importance of teacher professional program to teachers; the participant has this to say:

"...all teachers need professional development program in all fields of knowledge....." Miss Flourish

C. A way of getting new ideas

Professional development is seen as a way for teachers to gain knew ideas that are relevant to today's education needs this is supported by (Ajani et al., 2018) describes teachers' professional development as all strategies that can be used to improve classroom teaching of teachers for better teaching and learning results:

"...Professional development assures that one's knowledge and abilities remain current and relevant. It also makes teachers more aware of contemporary innovations in the teaching profession..." Mrs. Bassey

Research question two: What are the types of professional development that teachers participated in?

This related to the various form of professional activities that teachers are participating in during the course of their profession. Most of the participant noted that seminar, workshop, mentoring are the types they have attended, this is in line with (Oluwole et al., 2017), that highlighted professional development strategies, such as seminars, induction courses, workshops, conferences, and symposia in educational subjects. In the same vein, (Usono, 2010) acknowledged that in-service training, seminars, workshops, and conferences help employees bridge the gap between the abilities they have learned and the ones they are required to do. Here is what some of the participant said:

“...Professional development program that teacher does participate in differs, each of these programs is aimed to improve and develop teacher professionally in their difference areas of specialization..... The development program includes seminar, workshop, symposium, conference, skill question training, group discussion and so on.....” Miss Florish

Another participant has different opinion on this:

“...it has different types, there is professional training, there is professional education and professional support, and so all these are general type of educational development program, therefore, seminar, conferences and mentoring falls under the general ones.....” Mr. Uthman

Mr. Uthman also went ahead to give an example of the one he attended, here is what he says...

“...you know as mention that we have professional training, professional education and professional support that is the general type of it. The only one can say, since my employment in teaching profession at least I attend two or three I can say but the one I attend that are categorize it as under professional training in which we attend seminar that is based on learner centered approach of teaching...” Mr. Uthman

Another participant said:

“...I have attended numeracy-literacy seminar, then I also went for national teacher institute program where we spend one week, there they taught us about the different ways to teach each subject, the methods and how to involve the student more during the teaching and learning process...” Mrs. Ayo

“...I started working with grade II then I went for my NCE and then I got my degree, so they are also some forms of professional development if I must say...” Mrs. Ayo

The above statement of Mrs. Ayo is supported by the research of Adeboyeje (Adeboyeje, 2013) in his study he argued that in-service training for teachers no doubt develop in each teacher his general education and personal culture, his ability to teach and educate others and awareness of principles which underline good human relations Another participant noted that:

"...There are different types of teacher professional development that teachers participated in, for example seminar, workshop, mentoring, continuing education, those are the few that I know for now ... though on my own side, I have only had the privileged of mentoring and continuing education..." Mr. Aro

Research question three: What are the challenges of professional development training in Ilorin, Nigeria?

These are the difficulties the teachers pass through during the process of undergoing teacher professional development. Sub-themes that emerged were lack of funding, availability of the program, time constraint, transportation issue, lack of interest by the teachers, incompetent personnel, lack of awareness about the program and Government Issue. This is in line with the work of (Weli & Ollor, 2021) The findings of their shows that, poor funding by State/government agencies, some program not tailored to specific needs of teachers, poor condition of service/unsatisfied demands, conflict with work schedule, lack of financial support and lack of awareness on the part of teachers are some of the constraints to teachers' participation in development programs in Rivers State, Nigeria.

A. Lack of funding

This is one of the major challenges that are confronting the teacher professional development in Ilorin, Nigeria it is related to the financial involvement that is required before, during and after the training. This also true as noted by (Weli & Ollor, 2021) in a quantitative study carried out in Rivers state, Nigeria, poor funding ranked first in the challenges faced by teachers in TDP. The participant has this to say:

"...lack of fund, as I said earlier to go for private teacher professional program requires money in term of payment for the program and other stuffs that is attached to it like transportation, so it's not easy to participate in so many..." Mr. Aro

"...In adequate fund to carry out the program most times, government don't allocate sufficient to carry such program..."

"...any professional development program needs enough funds to be used to get materials for both organizer and participants. Some allowances are even accepted to pay the participants for the running of the program..." Miss Flourish

"...I will say inadequate funding, do you know why I said that when we are asked to go and attend the program, they didn't give us any money, it is a village that we have to go to, and they don't give allowance before the seminar so it's not easy on transportation side..." Mr Uthman.

B. Time constraint

This is also one of the challenges that were mentioned by the participants, it is related to the timing and the duration of the program. Here is what the participants said as regards this:

"...Another point is time, in the sense that the time to go for the program or let me say when the program falls in to is always during the school period and the principal will not give time to go for it because it will affect the school calendar..." Mr. Aro

C. Lack of interest by the teacher

This implies that not all the teachers sees professional development has something that they need or something that is very important in their career, this is in line with the work of Fareo (Fareo, 2013) it was noted that despite the activities embarked upon by the Local, State and Federal Government of Nigeria to expose teachers to frequent training and retraining, there are sizeable number of teachers who are resistant to change due to their negative attitudes to introduce new innovations and techniques to teach their students, which could lead to students failure.

"...it's the issue of interest most teachers see TDP as a waste of time and resources, they believe they already know everything so most of them only attend when they know that there is financial backing..." Mrs Bassey

D. Incompetent personnel

During the course of the interview some of the participant noted that the personnel that are supposed to be in charge of training them are not competent enough here is what some of them said....

"...Also, incompetent resource person is a big challenge in the course professional development activities. It is generally believed that a tutor most no more much more than the students. If the other way round in the case, the aim of organizing professional development program as been defeated..." Mrs. Bassey

E. Availability of the program

This implies that the program are not readily available and accessible to the teacher that are willing to participate this is also noted by Fareo (Fareo, 2013), This program is for serving teachers but is not uncommon to find director and other senior officers of the ministry and relevant departments enrolling for the conference at the expense of the

practicing teachers. Enrolments of Artisans, Motor cycle riders and traders for such programmes are also common scenes in Nigeria. Of course, reasons for this may not be farfetched. These are most likely for financial gains and not for professional development.

A participant has this to say:

"...the first one is the availability of the program itself because they didn't make it open and it is those that have connection that are able to go for the one that is organized by the government..." Miss Aro

F. Government issue

This implies to the non-commitment on the part of the government to the teacher professional development this is supported by the work of Fareo (Fareo, 2013), he noted that a very major issue in teacher professional development in Nigeria is the lack of commitment by the government. The participant has this to say:

"...though government makes policy that said teachers will be allowed to go for professional development, but it's only in paper, there is no follow up, even if you want to go for further education, you might not be granted leave with pay..." Mrs. Bassey

4. Conclusion

The findings of this research shows that the issue of teacher professional development cannot be over-emphasized, the perceptions of the teacher are almost the same when they were asked to say their opinion, sub-themes such as life-long process, teachers need and emerged, most of the participant mentioned that workshops, seminar, conferences and continuing education are the types of teacher professional development that they know and lastly there are a lot of challenges that they face during the course of undergoing professional development, these are inadequate funding, unavailability of the program, time constraints, government issue, incompetent personnel among others. This contribution helps extend the theoretical knowledge of teacher professional development as teachers' voices promote a contextual understanding of their experiences that can inform future research and shape practical, capacity-building professional development experiences that enhance teacher practice in the classroom.

4.1 Recommendation

Based on these results, the following suggestions were made:

- 1) Teacher professional development should be made available to all teachers and not just some few privileged ones
- 2) There should be proper monitoring during the selection process so that those that are non-teachers are not selected.
- 3) Government should also ensure that teachers are motivated (financially) when they are going for continuing education

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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