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IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN NIGERIA: THROUGH OPEN AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

Abstract

Education authorities have seemed to agree that increasing standards for pre-service education of teachers will not necessarily lessen the need for continued in-service preparation and professional growth. No amount of time spent in college or university will complete the preparation of the teacher for classroom tasks. Teachers, like doctors, ministers, and lawyers, must continue with their education after graduation. Constantly applying new techniques and materials make education in service absolutely necessary. If teachers are to become real leaders in their respective schools, teachers must be provided with a programme of in-service training which is concerned with doing and not merely with listening. Distance education has played a role in meeting these challenges and is likely to play an increasing one. However, the paper examines how open and distance education (ODL) affects teachers professional development and offers suggestions on how ICTS could be used to improved and increased teachers professional skills in Nigeria. In industrialized countries, ODL has been used to reach new constituencies of potential teachers who would not otherwise have become teachers. It has provided qualified university graduates with teaching licences or professional qualifications to support school based training.

Keywords: In-Service, Training, Professional Development, Teachers, Teaching
          Pedagogy, Open and Distance Education

Introduction

There is increasing and strong interest among governments, institutions, international agencies and teachers in the use of open and distance education methods and technologies for initial training and continuing professional development for teachers. The last decades have seen considerable growth in the number and diversity of distance education programmes, and the integration of distance education with traditional provision and new initiatives using information and communication technologies (ICTs). These trends are prompted by the need to meet teacher shortages and the demand for more continuing education for teachers in a changing world.

Teachers face a widening range of demands everywhere, for example:

Teachers throughout the world are experiencing an unprecedented transition in their role and status and demands on them are becoming increasingly multi-faceted… Many teachers do not have the training or experience to cope with this changing role (European Commission, 2000: 40).

Unfortunately, the high expectations and growing demands on teachers tend to run in parallel with low status, low pay and poor working conditions: 'teachers are at the heart of the education revolution, but many feel under siege... their diminished

status is a worldwide phenomenon' (UNICEF, 1999: 39 in Robinson & Colin, 2003). The situation of teachers had reached what the International Labour Organisation described as 'an intolerably low point', because working conditions had declined (UNESCO, 1998: 38). Many qualified teachers leave teaching for more attractive careers, new graduates are not attracted to teaching, and recruitment into teacher training draws lower-qualified entrants as teaching becomes an occupation of last resort.

The educational level on entry to teaching varies widely. Though the Recommendations Concerning the Status of Teachers (UNESCO & ILO, 1966) proposed the completion of secondary education as a minimum entry standard, this has not yet been achieved worldwide. A typical primary school teacher in one country may have a master's degree and postgraduate teacher training and teach in a well-resourced school with small classes- good pay, a well-defined career path, and access to a choice of staff development opportunities and professional communities of teachers. While in another, a primary school teacher may have completed primary education only, be untrained as a teacher, have two jobs (teaching plus farming, trading or private tutoring), or teach in a poorly resourced school in a remote area with little job security, and no career ladder in teaching and little opportunity for professional development.

In Nigeria, unqualified teachers have been a necessity. Nigeria's considerable achievements in the expansion of Universal free Primary Education in 1976 (UPE) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999 had resulted in part for the use of unqualified teachers for the former, though these have now been phased out as planning goals start to shift from quantity to quality. The minimum entry to teaching profession is Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Many of the issues about the quality of teachers and teacher training are linked to problems of supply and demand, shaped by specific circumstances. Nigeria has too few qualified and trained teachers.

Attempts to solve problems of shortages have included searches for new untapped sources of potential teachers, emergency training schemes and increased use of para-professional teachers. Hence, the need for this paper.

What is In-Service Training?

For the purposes of this paper, in-service training is defined as a workshop for employed professionals, paraprofessionals and other practitioners to acquire new knowledge, better methods, etc. for improving their skills toward more effective, efficient and competent rendering of service in various fields and to diverse groups of people. Further, such a workshop is a training designed to benefit a specific group of teachers at a particular school. A good in-service training should, via workshop trainees and improve the quality of programming for the development of teachers in service.

What is Professional Development of Teachers?

This refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees to formal coursework,

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, and communities of practice, lesson study, mentoring, reflective supervision and technical assistance

Student achievement is linked to numerous factors, but quality teachers are one of the most important components of student success. If school teachers do not have the tools they need to teach students effectively, their students will suffer. To teach effectively, teachers need access to ongoing teacher professional development. This professional development enables teachers to improve their own education through seminars, workshops, and classes.

Through teacher professional development, teachers learn new teaching strategies to improve the quality of instruction. This allows them to make changes in the way they teach their students, incorporating innovative teaching methods in the classroom. It teaches them how to work with a variety of learning styles, since not all students learn the same way. It also helps teachers change their day-to-day teaching methods, encouraging them to accept new methods based on accurate education research.

What should be the principles for professional development?

Principles for Professional Development should:

- Ensure depth of content knowledge.
- Provide a strong foundation in the pedagogy of particular disciplines.
- Provide more general knowledge about teaching and learning processes, and about schools and institutions.
- Reflect the best available research.
- Contribute to measurable achievements in student learning.
- Expect teachers to be intellectually engaged with ideas and resources.
- Provide sufficient time, support and resources to enable teachers to master new content and pedagogy and integrate these into their practice (American Federation of Teachers, 1995).

What can the various media, technologies and ICT contribute to teacher training?

Impact of ICTs in Distance Education to Teacher Professional Development

The UNESCO (2002) report identifies four different functions of information and communication technologies (ICT) in ODL teacher education:

- as an aid to distribution of materials;
- as a means of affording two-way electronic communication;
- through networked computers which allow access to the internet and multi-way communication; and
- as a means of diversifying into resource-based, self-accessed teacher education.

In many countries it is shown that without appropriate **pre-service teacher training (PRESET)** and **in-service education and training (INSET),** ICT will never play a central role in educational renewal and innovation.

Pre-Service Teacher Training (PRESET) in ICT

At the PRESET level, teachers clearly need to master the core technical knowledge and skills, this means knowledge and skills to:

- use computers and managing files,
- do word processing,
- create spreadsheets,
- use a database,
- create a presentation, and
- understand basic information and communication technology.

This technical training is often provided in PRESET but is not always a requirement for teacher certification.

In-Service Education and Training (INSET) in ICT

Serving teachers need to be familiarised not only with the technology but with:

- the teaching and instructional design skills that will enable them to help their pupils engage in constructivist thinking, experimentation, problem-solving and learning linked to real life situations;
- how to exploit collaboration tools such as weblogs, wikis, podcasts, Flickr and YouTube so that pupils can create, adapt and share content, discuss issues and support one another's learning;
- the use of e-assessment - that is, not only using ICT for true/false, multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank testing, but also assessing pupils' abilities in self directed study, information retrieval, analysis, synthesis, problem-solving and creativity; and
- the use of e-portfolios - that is, creating multimedia records of pupils' efforts, achievements and reflections on learning for the purposes of conducting formative assessment, showcasing pupils' best work and conducting summative assessment (Kheng et al., 2000).

ICTs that Facilitate the In-Service Training of Teachers

The major types of ICT products currently being studied by teachers include:

- tutorial software and simulations for knowledge transfer; and conceptual development;
- email and conferencing software for communication support;
- groupware and other tools for collaborative learning;
- concept mapping and other tools for conceptual manipulation;
- software for access to educational databases;
- specialized computer-based tools for subject areas such as mathematics and technical drawing;
- software for testing and assessment; and
- different forms of web-based resources (Collis, 2001).

There are widespread examples of the use of ICTs for this purpose. They are as follows:

Virtual Workplace: This is video-conferencing and web-based technologies for synchronous and asynchronous interaction between pre- and in-service teachers. It aims to enhance pedagogy in teacher training, student teachers' learning in their undergraduate studies and teaching practice, and teachers' supervision or mentoring of the students.

Telematics for Teacher Training (T3): This aimed to enhance primary and secondary teachers', teacher trainers' and librarians' professional development and it encourage teacher-trainers to adopt ICT. It is a web-site providing resources for teacher trainers and modelled best practice in site design (Moonen & Voogt, 2001).

The Virtual Teachers Centre: It is Teachers Online project, which allows teachers to link electronically to learn about others' work, create a virtual community of practice, sharing ideas through live chat, and access and share a variety of learning and teaching resources and links to other sites. (Moonen & Voogt, 2001).

EduNet: is an integrated educational internet service for students and teachers managed by the Korea Education and Research Information Services (KERIS). It supports the introduction of virtual learning in primary and secondary schools, provides online teacher training, promotes teachers' networking and supports teachers' voluntary clubs by providing self-training materials and various online forums (Moonen & Voogt, 2001).

TINTIN: was established as an online teacher networking. It provided two teachers' networks, one for teachers of German, the other for teachers of French. These networks used email, listservs and occasionally, face-to-face interaction. The teachers primarily used this network to share information - reflective exchanges occurred rarely-and it was shown that teacher anxiety decreased and productivity-increased during the network experience (Moonen & Voogt, 2001).

The US Teachers Network: is a nationwide, non-profit educational organization that identifies and connects teachers exemplifying professionalism and creativity within public school systems, promotes collaboration among educators to improve teaching and student achievement, provides resources to support teachers in their own professional development, and disseminates the work of outstanding classroom teachers.

Government in Nigeria should help the teachers to use the widespread examples of the ICTs in all teacher education.

Can distance education support continuing professional development and training of teachers more widely, effectively and affordably?

Role of Distance Education in Teacher Professional Development in Nigeria

Teacher education is an important area where distance education has been used extensively to provide pre-service teacher preparation, upgrading of academic qualifications, and in-service continuing professional development and content areas and instructional methods. Many examples, particularly from both developing and developed countries, show that teacher training at a distance may reach large groups of teachers and may have profound impact on the development of national education systems. Examples include distance learning initiatives in countries such as Nigeria,

Burkina Faso, Chile, China, India, Mongolia, and South Africa to prepare new teachers or upgrade skills of the existing teaching force (Ojokheta, 2000; UNESCO, 2002).

It is the acute shortage of qualified primary school teachers that led the Federal Government of Nigeria to establish the National Teachers' Institute (NTI in 1976), a distance education college for teachers upgrading. Its mission was to provide initial teacher qualifications and upgrade the quality of teachers through distance education. Its courses and qualifications were equivalent to those of conventional teachers Colleges. NTI is an educational parastatal; with headquarter in Kaduna and offices in 36 states. It has made enormous contribution to teacher supply and is now an institutionalised part of the teacher education system as its meeting the Education For All 2015 targets.

Distance education plays an increasingly important role in helping to address the growing shortage of teachers. Education institutions in Nigeria are using the internet as the principal or supplementary means of providing both pre-service and in-service teacher education. There are a growing number of high quality Web-based professional development resources available for educators in Nigeria. In addition, the number of universities in Nigeria that are offering online degree programmes and courses for educators across the country has grown exponentially in recent years.

The Web provides teachers with incredibly rich instructional and information resources to enhance their instruction and professional skills and the possibility of on-demand, just-in-time professional development without leaving their classrooms. The Web also provides opportunities for online mentoring and support of novice teachers during their first year of teaching and to develop online communities of practice. Virtual Web-based environments for teachers now enable them to seek help from other teachers, locally, nationally, or globally in solving classroom problems, sharing lesson plans and materials, interacting with experts in particular fields, and in planning collaborative curriculum development projects (Omolewa, 1982).

However, the Web provides an important resource for teacher education institutions and agencies and centres that provide professional development to teachers in the country. In countries with limited access to technology infrastructure/ radio, television and print-based materials are used to address teacher education needs. The China Television Teacher's College, a part of the China Central Radio and Television University, uses television-based distance education to prepare new teachers and provide a range of distance education professional development programmes to primary and secondary teachers, principals and administrators (UNESCO, 2002).

In Nigerian perspective, the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN), have the NOUN radio, also in University of Lagos, Akoka, Nigeria use the UNILAG Radio, and the Institute of Management and Technology, (IMT) Enugu among others are known for their (UNIAIR) programme. These radio stations are where student listens and receives their lectures. These are very popular and are being used by these institutions, to broadcast educational programs of variety on areas such as teacher education, rural development, programme in agriculture for farmers, science education, creative writing, mass communication, in addition to traditional courses in liberal arts, science and business administration (Amadi, 2010).

Also, Brazil's national distance education system, PROFORMACAO, is used to provide initial training to unqualified preschool and primary education teachers and

combines self-study and bi-weekly workshops using print-based and video materials. Other countries with limited technology facilities also rely heavily on print-based materials as well as radio and other media options. India, for example, uses print-based materials, audio and video cassettes, coupled with optional face-to-face tutorials in local study centres, while Mongolia uses radio and print-based materials as part of the strategy to help primary The above examples illustrate some of the ways the technology resources available within each country may be used to provide pre-service and in-service teacher education and Nigeria will not be an exception.

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