

In-Service Education of Teachers: Overview, Problems and the Way Forward

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Abstract

The need for in-service education of teachers cannot be underestimated. It is a necessity in enhancing work performance and motivation of teachers in the field. Absence of in-service training of teachers will retard professional growth of teachers as well as “missing gaps” between demands and actual achievement levels. In-service education allows for such activities that may include seminars, workshops, conferences, classes, exhibitions etc that are designed to develop and improve employees in an organization from the initial employment stage to retirement. From the foregoing, it becomes imperative that every attention should be devoted to the inservice education of teachers to promote their professional growth and development. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to have an overview and problems of in-service education of teachers in Nigeria. Finally, relevant suggestions were put forward to achieve a better staff development programme aimed at helping teachers to update their knowledge, expertise, skills and competence in the teaching profession.

Keywords: Overview, In-service, Education, In-service Education and Way Forward

Introduction

In-service education is designed for the manpower development of the school system and the educational enterprise as a whole. If teachers are to perform their functions effectively and efficiently, it becomes imperative for them to require training in new skills and modern methodology. The higher the level of educational attainment by teachers, the higher the level of educational standard in the country. No wonder the national Policy on Education (2014) asserted that no level of education can rise above the quality of its teachers.

To meet the growing needs of education in a global economy it becomes imperative to provide sound in-service education for teachers to update their skills, knowledge and experience.

Concept of In-Service Education

In-service education can simply be defined as the relevant courses and activities in which a serving teacher may participate to upgrade his professional knowledge, skills, and competence in the teaching profession. Therefore, it encompasses all forms of education and training given to a teacher who is already on the job of teaching and learning.

According to billing (1976) in-service education is staff development which is a deliberate and continuous process involving the identification and discussion of present and anticipated needs of individual staff for furthering their job satisfaction and career prospects and of the institution for supporting its academic work and plans, and implementation of programmes of staff activities designed for the harmonious satisfaction of these needs.

Generally, the teachers are regarded as the hub of educational development. Therefore, in-service education is concerned with the activities and courses in which a serving teacher may participate for the purpose of upgrading his professional skills, knowledge and interest, subsequent to initial training. In this case, in-service education is designed to fill the gap of professional inadequacies of a serving teacher. As Fisher (2003) has rightly pointed out the skill appropriate for generation ago might no longer prepare students for the world beyond school. Students are being tasked to be more creative and thoughtful in their daily activities.

In-service education is also referred to as continuing education that is designed for the retraining, re-skilling and updating the knowledge of manpower. According to UNESCO (1985) continuing education can be regarded as the entire body of educational processes whatever the content level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in the two fold perspective of full personal development and participation on balance and independent social, economic and cultural development.

Rationale for In-Service Education of Teachers

The rationale for in-service education of teachers cannot be overemphasized. There is no doubt that the National Policy on Education (2014) prescribed NCE as the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria. Consequently, teachers now engage in one form of in-service training or the other to cater for their inadequacies and extend their professional competencies. No wonder, Kolo (2013) asserted that education is the key to human capital

development and the system must be subject to reforms and repositioning as static education system do not transform societies.

Kpangbam (1992) pointed out that rationale for INSET for teachers are as follows:

1. it is recognized that however good existing pre-service teacher education programmes are, they by their very nature cannot equip intending teachers with all they need for a life-time of work in the classroom.
2. there is increasing awareness of the impact of social, political and technological changes and of the need for teachers to be conscious of and responsive to such changes.
3. there are clear indications that teachers are members of an under-educated profession, whose working conditions do not encourage the kinds of peer interaction which would improve performance.
4. there is growing expectation that teacher should reform their own practice, as it is only then that meaningful curriculum development could take place in the daily routine of classrooms.
5. there is a growing number of specialized administrative roles that teachers have to take up with passing years in teaching, for example, head of department, head of blocks and counsellor and effective performance of the tasks requires specialized training because they involve the exercise of leadership skills and judgement of a high order (Willson, 1977, Bolam 1978).

In addition, Alabi and Ige (2014) highlighted the rationale for in-service education of teachers as follows:

1. preponderance of unqualified teachers in the educational system
2. improvement of the curriculum
3. unsatisfied admission demands
4. issue of unemployment
5. poor performance of students in examinations
6. degrading quality of teaching
7. education gap between the southern and northern parts of Nigeria.

In the light of the above, one would expect that the teacher-training (pre-service and in-service) should acquire certain competencies for professional enhancement. Berger and Goldberg (1974) highlighted these competencies as follows:

1. Understanding and appreciating the educational objectives of the curriculum
2. Having an interdisciplinary science and technological education including history and philosophy of science rather than being a specialist in only one discipline.
3. Seeking creativity
4. Being technological literate
5. Being capable of divergent thinking i.e. capable of dealing openly and intelligently with open minded questions, and at the same time having the capacity to see new related issues evolved and new questions to be defined and answered.
6. Extending the capacity and imagination to improvise.
7. Developing self-confidence and independence.
8. Ensuring familiarity with the variety of existing instructional materials and available resources.
9. Increasing integration power i.e. how to put it all together.

Principles of In-Service Education

IN-service education is imperative in a fast changing world like Nigeria in view of the prevailing changes in science and technology. To actualize the set objectives of in-service education in any organization some basic principles should be taken into consideration, as enumerated by Stoops et al (1981) as follows:

1. In-service programme emerges from recognized needs of the school and community.
2. All school personnel need in-service education
3. Proper supervisor is an effective means of accelerating the in-service professional growth.
4. Improving the quality of instruction is the immediate and long range objectives of in-service education.
5. In-service education leads to a continuous process of re-examination and revision of the educational programme. Additionally, it encourages participants to attain self-realization through competence, accomplishment and security.
6. In-service education has increasingly become the concern of state agencies, colleges, and universities, school boards, school administrators and teachers.
7. Supervisors should create an atmosphere that will stimulate a desire on the part of teachers for in-service growth.
8. The in-service programme should provide for keeping abreast with research and advances in education
9. An in-service programme is most effective when cooperatively initiated and planned.

Types of In-Service Education

As a matter of fact, most teachers found in our classrooms today have nothing to offer to students by ways of

professional training. Such teachers need in-service training to update their knowledge, skills and competence. In-service education programmes can be categorized into different forms. According to Asaya (1991), there are eight varieties of in-service education as follows:

1. Institutes (a series of lectures designed to give participants as much information as possible in a short time, usually two or three days).
2. Conferences (give participants an opportunity to question others and discuss ideas presented)
3. Workshops (usually a moderate size group, where each person has a problem to solve that is closely related to his field (A skilled consultant work with each group)
4. Staff meetings (may perform a useful in-service function but generally used to acquaint teachers with administrative proceeds users and policies)
5. Committee (five or several members work on a problem that could be impossible for a whole staff to tackle).
6. Professional reading (with the aid of a professional library' study groups)
7. Individual conferences (dependent of feelings of mutual understanding and support existing between teacher and supervisor).
8. Visits and demonstrations (opportunity to observe actual teaching techniques).

In the same vein, Maduabum (1992) summarized the different forms of in-service education as follows:

1. Regular courses: These are the full time courses undertaken during the normal academic session. The period of the programme depends on the type of course e.g B.A (ed), B.Sc (Ed), postgraduate Diploma in Education (P.G.D.E.), M.Ed & Ph.D.
2. Conferences: these are academic gathering in which certain speaker come prepared, often by invitation or for a fee, to open discussion on some reasonably interesting or controversial theme. Generally, conference attendees come to listen, question the main speakers, make additional prepared or spontaneous contributions to their own, evaluate opinions and points of view, and discuss formally and informally among themselves.
3. Workshops: Just like conferences, workshops can be regarded as academic gatherings but in this case aimed primarily at providing within the intellectual horizons of participants, selected functional experiences that will enhance their performance on the job. Workshops are characterized by individual or group role assignments. Resources persons are usually invited who come prepared and provide working procedures to participants.
4. Seminars: A seminar is an academic forum whose major purpose centres on a reflection or discussion of problems. It is piloted by a coordinator who has a written responsibility of putting down precise or brief summary of the views expressed by each member of the discussion panel. At the end of the session, the coordinator presents the highlights of the views expressed and invites questions, comments, observations or contributions from the audience to encourage total participation.
5. Correspondence Courses: In this type of in-service training, there is no physical contact between the teacher and the student. Communication between the teachers and students is through post, hence the name correspondence education.
6. Exhibitions: These can be regarded as physical displays of scientific interest intended to enlighten a wider scientific community. They could be of classroom application or in a broader context geared towards solving societal problems e.g. making of soap or dyes from local resources.

Benefits of In-Service Teacher Education

There is no doubt that in-service education will continue to fill the missing links created by the changing society between pre-service education and teacher's effectiveness in the world of work.

The National Policy on Education (2014, revised edition) emphasized the significance of in-service training of teachers, so that education can be advantageously employed to fulfill national philosophy. Thus, the policy states that:

Teacher education will continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology, and in the curriculum. Teachers' will be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. In-service training will be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education. No matter the efficiency of the pre-service training we give to teachers, there will necessarily be areas of inadequacies. In-service education of teachers will continue to fill these gaps e.g. for library services education, evaluation techniques, Guidance and counselling etc, and will be systematically planned so that successful attendance at a number of such courses will attract incremental credits and/or count towards future advancement.

The benefits of in-service education can, therefore, be summarized below as highlighted by Imogie (1992) as follows:

- i. Providing the serving professional teachers ample opportunities of updating their knowledge and skills towards better objective performance and advancement in status, without having to resign their

- employment.
- ii. Providing the schools system the opportunities of retaining the services of trained and qualified teachers while in sandwich/in-service education programme.
- iii. Providing opportunities for increasing the number of trained and qualified teachers at all levels of education
- iv. Reducing the financial burden of employers of teachers, as the money they had to pay as salaries and allowances on full-time to their teachers on full-pay/time in-service education programme was saved.
- v. Providing additional sources of revenue generation for teacher education institutions in which the sandwich programmes are based.
- vi. Providing additional source of income to staff members participating in the programmes.
- vii. Providing opportunities for teacher education institutions to provide service in an essential area of national development, especially by putting their facilities and staff into use during the long vacations.

Problems of In-Service Education

A plethora of problems have been identified to militate against in-service education programmes as follows:

1. In-service education programme is capital intensive and most of the participants are self-sponsored. As a result, many of them cannot cope with exorbitant school fees and other incidental expenses for textbooks and personal upkeeps.
2. The time factor is a major constraint as contact hours for lectures and examinations are inadequate. Therefore, the effectiveness and scope of instruction is in doubt.
3. There are a lot of discrepancies in the approaches and techniques adopted by the different institutions involved in in-service education programmes which imply lack of uniformity in course content and methodology.
4. There is the problem of poor planning and organization whereby available activities for participants are impersonal and unrelated to their job settings in the classroom.
5. There is the problems of inadequate facilities in terms of classrooms, laboratories and boarding facilities to accommodate the size of enrolment.

In the same vein, Imogie (1992) enumerated the problems of in-service teacher education programme as follows:

- i. The size of the enrollment is often too large to allow for any meaningful instruction. Enrollments run to hundreds in most subject areas, while total enrolment runs into thousands in most institutions.
- ii. The massive enrolment create problems of effective management of both instruction and students.
- iii. The desire to make the programmes self-sustaining financially, as there are usually no institutional budgetary provisions, has led to the watering down of admission requirements into the programmes. Thus, there can be no doubt that several weak students have been admitted over the years by several institutions.
- iv. The desire to admit as many students due to budgetary considerations has allowed several unemployed pre-service teachers to find their way into the programmes originally designed as in-service for practicing teachers.
- v. The effectiveness of the intensity and scope of instruction in the various subjects leave much to be desired as there is always no enough content hours to cover the syllabus. Thus, the in-service education programme is characterized by 'mad' rush and the quality of the products is in doubt.
- vi. Most lecturers, in an attempt to make more of the extra money, take on many courses and overload themselves. Such overloading causes time-tabling problems. The lecturers can hardly be effective in such circumstances.
- vii. The in-service teacher education programmes are characterized by excessive sales of handouts, some of which are worthless.
- viii. The unpredictable nature of the academic year in the universities and other teacher education institutions has made it impossible to keep the long vacation nature of the sandwich teacher education programmes in most campuses. For example, in most cases, during long vacations, when sandwich students are supposed to come into residence in the campus, the regular students are just halfway into the second semester. Thus, several sandwich programmes have been organized in primary or Secondary School under terrible hardship.
- ix. Under such hardship, students have had to sleep in classrooms. Classes are held in classrooms without seats, desks, and chalkboards. Science, language and geography courses have been held without appropriate laboratory facilities. These frustrating conditions under which some of the sandwich programmes are held have direct influence on the quality of the programmes.

- x. Many of the teacher education institutions have often embarked on sandwich programmes in areas/fields where they do not have the basic instructional facilities, infrastructure and staff.
- xi. The rate and manner at which the students on sandwich teacher education programmes in the various universities and colleges, leave and return to their base (school) have been causing some disruptive effects on their schools academic and other programmes. There have been cases when teachers on sandwich teachers education programmes were not available to teach their classes and even to conduct examinations etc, because they either left too earlier or returned very late from the programmes

Conclusion and Recommendations

In-service education of teachers should be seen as a necessity to achieve the national objectives of the Nigerian educational system. In view of the apparent problems confronting in-service teacher education, the following recommendations are made:

1. There is need to have a well planned in-service education programme with clearly defined objectives growth and improvement of instruction and leadership skills.
2. In-service education should be recognized as part of institutional or organizational activities designed by government for staff development and motivation.
3. Organizers of in-service education should focus on job related tasks that are real, practical oriented and relevant to the participants.
4. Efforts should be directed to assist the participants to work in small groups and learn from each other rather than focusing on information dissemination that is not applicable in practical classroom setting or environment.
5. There is need for the government through the federal and state ministries to set up a slandering committee to regulate the conduct of in-service training for teachers to ensure uniformity of standard in course content, methodology and evaluation.
6. Government should encourage participants in in-service training through adequate funding to cater for some areas of their needs such as tuition fees, cost of textbooks and handouts, transport and boarding facilities.
7. Deliberate efforts should be made by the various institutions to provide adequate tables and chairs, classrooms, laboratories and boarding facilities for participants to facilitate effective instruction.

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