

Professional Development of Teachers, Action Planning and Utilizing 21st Century Skills in Nigerian Schools

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Abstract

Professional development is essential for every individual irrespective of the profession. It should be noted that knowledge is not immutable in a world of change. The dynamic nature of the society demands that every human being will continue to improve and adjust himself or herself to the changing times in order to remain relevant. Teacher's professional and personal development becomes a necessary proposition. Undoubtedly, teachers straight from training are clumsy and do not perform well on the job. They have simply learnt the elements of a very complex skill that with time, helped by professional and personal development, will make them experts. This paper, therefore, focuses on the need for continuous professional development of Nigerian teachers to enable them plan and utilize 21st Century skills in teaching children at different levels of education. The renewed concern for the quality rather than the quantity of teachers stems from the fact that the training college/university programmes do not completely make one an effective teacher. A teacher who, therefore, does not strive to improve himself is falling behind...

Key words: Professional development, Teachers, Action planning, Utilizing skills

INTRODUCTION

Professional 'development is essential for every individual, whether employed or not. It is vital for every business and professional organization to increase the knowledge and skills of their employees. They should strive to enhance the quality of performance, to ensure an improvement on the personal and professional front. Professional development is necessary to increase knowledge and skill, through certified and consistent education in the profession. A professional development program boosts the individual's career, through travel, research, workshops and seminars and by working with professionals who are experienced. People take up a professional development course to build their expertise in business, teaching, nursing, etc and contribute to organizational development.

THE MEANING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development generally refers to on going learning opportunities available to teachers and other education personnel through their schools. It has to do with the skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college or university degrees to formal coursework, conferences and information learning opportunities.

Effective professional development is often seen as vital to school success and teacher satisfaction. With schools today facing an array of complex challenges from working with an increasingly diverse population of students, to integrating new technology in the classroom, to meeting rigorous academic standards and goals, observers continue to stress the need for teachers to be able to enhance and build on their instructional knowledge. Therefore, professional development is the process of improving and increasing capabilities of staff through access to education and training opportunities in the workplace, through outside organization or through watching others perform the job. Professional development helps build and maintain morale of staff members, and is thought to attract higher quality staff to an organization. It should be a continuous process of acquiring new knowledge and skills that relate to one's professional job *responsibilities or* work environment. It plays a key role in maintaining trained, informed and motivated employees, regardless of job classification.

Quality professional development has the power to increase educator's knowledge of academic content and teaching skills while changing what educator's believe about student learning and how they interact with students. Powerful professional development can transform schools into places in which all adults and students are deeply engaged in learning and making meaning of their lives. Professional development should be based on students needs, driven by the intended result and desired changes in educator's knowledge, skills and attitudes, and designed to transform the organization into a learning community.

WHO PARTICIPATES N PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND WHY

A wide variety of people, such as teachers, military officers and non-commissioned officers, health care

professionals, lawyers, accountants, and engineers engage in professional development. Individuals may participate in professional development because of an interest in lifelong learning, to maintain and improve professional competence, to enhance career progression, keep abreast of new technology and practice, or to comply with professional regulatory organizations.

THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The purpose of our teacher's self-development stems from the history of our teaching profession. During the early years of the profession, anybody at all could be called upon to teach, because it was considered everybody's job. Infact, many of the teachers had little more formal education than those being taught. Today, the story is different. Education for nation building is the guiding principles of the school and there is a significant improvement in the educational attainment of teachers. There is also the motivation in the organizational structure of the school system and the educational status of the teacher has improved considerably. At the same time, the educational level of parents has grown and there is a relative high level of expectation of teachers. Undoubtedly, the teachers scope of participation in improvement of school programs now demand of him a relative rise in his professional competence. The teacher's self-development has two complementary aspects: professional and personal

To be professional, teachers need to have a profound conviction of the worth of their work. For this feeling to exist, the individual must have a sense of greatness of his profession, of its significance for society and its power to benefit students.

The personal development of a teacher is formally referred to in matter of his personality: Special interest in hobbies, sports, travel, things that contribute to his physical and mental health, his values and beliefs, how he relates to people, sense of humour, manner and views of life. One can sum up the chief attributes of teacher's personal development along these lines:

- i) a good knowledge of the culture and tradition of his people;
- ii) possession of in-depth knowledge and understanding of democracy;
- iii) ability to discover and develop his artistic abilities-art, music, drama, etc
- iv) development of a keen social and civic consciousness: giving social services and inspiring pupils to get involved;
- v) Cultivating of the right attitude to knowledge, realizing that knowledge is increasing and that the teaching and learning process has to be life-long.

It should be noted that we cannot separate a teacher's personal development from his professional development. Infact, whatever affects the personal-self of a teacher automatically affects his work in the classroom. For instance, if a teacher is dispirited, it reflects on his activities in the classroom.

REASONS FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

- a. *Growth of Mental and Physical Health of Teachers:* Teaching has its many surprises just as much as it has its unpleasant side. If the teacher is to meet these situations with poise and confidence, he needs good mental health. Teachers who are mentally healthy are able to stand children's emotional upsets and bear the ups and downs of classroom life with confidence and understanding. The desire to improve oneself on the job is a must for anybody who is serious about his work, getting involved in courses for personal development relieves good teachers of emotional strain and excessive fatigue. Good in-services courses are, therefore, tension-reducing and change-of-pace activities which should be the concern of all serious teachers.
- b. *Broadening his social contacts:* The teacher's job is generally confined to the four walls of the classroom. He therefore may not have much contact with his colleagues. No one would doubt that for a teacher to be successful, his view of life should be larger than himself. A teacher's concern and association with the larger society is important for his Job. In-service training for professional growth offers the opportunities to make friends and widen social contacts. The healthy association with colleagues on courses also helps him to get inside the experiences of others and so feel with them.
- c. *The desire to know more about the profession:* The teaching profession has one strange characteristic, namely the desire to know more. This is necessary to keep pace with the needs of professional growth. Good teachers, therefore, feel inadequate if they do not reach out for more knowledge and so lose their sense of pride.
- d. *Advancement on the job:* Everybody wants to get on in his job. This is the basic ambition of a professional person. Nobody wants to remain at one level of teaching throughout his career. They want to become head-teachers, curriculum specialists, guidance counselors, psychologists, supervisors, principals, heads of department, directors, etc. All these positions are available to those who work their way up through in-service courses and self-study. Apart from the knowledge gained in this way, there is

also the corresponding rise in salaries.

The need for teacher's self-development is therefore predicated on the following factors:

- a) Limitations of College /University work: College/ University work, however well planned, cannot be all encompassing because it prepares people for a changing world. It deals mainly with knowledge, methods and techniques as well as principles that can be generally applied. It does not aim at preparing teachers for every situation that they will meet in the classroom. This is a wise policy because every child the teacher meets, creates his own problems that cannot be anticipated during his course of training. The course does not also cover sufficiently detailed experiences that the student teacher will need in dealing with the whole range of individual differences he will meet in the normal classroom situation on the job. A well prepared teacher is expected to appreciate those soft spots of College/ University education.
- b) Limitations of the teaching profession: The teaching profession has some outstanding weak points which are unfortunately not emphasized in College/ University education. These weak points make it different from many other professions, such as law, medicine, accountancy, etc. Members of these professions have opportunities of learning from their colleagues in the course of their work through sheer observation and comparison of other people's work with their own performance. The togetherness is an incentive to personal and professional growth. In the case of teaching, the teacher is secluded; he is his own master in the four-walled classroom. Thus, the teaching profession is non-competitive.
- c) Protective certification procedures: We all know that once a teacher is certified, he remains for ever a teacher. This practice does not motivate teachers to push ahead in their professional development.
- d) Young clientele of the teaching profession: Perhaps the most obvious cause of poor self-development among teachers is the fact that they deal with children who are considered a captive audience. A lawyer who continues to loose his case at court will not have as many clients as the other who wins cases because he is up to date. This is so because most of the people he deals with are adults who always want to get their money's worth.
- e) New career patterns in the teaching profession: Teachers have moved a long way towards the status of professional in Nigeria. Today there exists a Teachers Registration Council (TRC) charged with the responsibility of registering qualified teachers in Nigeria and regulating the teaching profession.
- f) changes in content of Education-New Curriculum Development: There is a general need for curriculum change in order to address the shifts in job. Structures caused by the improvements in technology. In fact, the changes in our society demand changes in what Nigerian schools are to teach. However, such change is the cry of all countries developed and under-developed.
The heart of any curriculum implementation programme is the teacher. It is he who reduces it to the personal level of the child in the classroom. If, therefore, there is to be any progressive change in him, the institutions that produce him, the ministries and boards, that employ him and the profession to which he belongs should first "BE BORN AGAIN" in the spirit of the precept and example of the expected change. With the present pressure for curriculum change, the teacher and his college are expected to be aware that in Nigeria today, the activities of our classroom are to be determined by the needs and interests of the individual child. This calls for the need for the teachers continued self-development.
- g) The impact of technology and industry on the teaching profession: There is no doubt that the development of technological education is the answer to economic independence of the Nigerian nation. Technological education should cut across all facets of the education industry. This will be a major way to reduce the staggering unemployment figures in Nigeria. The technological educational revolution that took place in Japan is what Nigeria needs very urgently. It should be noted that where the economy of the country is unable to create new jobs, social and economic problems cannot be easily solved. This is where we are today. The unique role of teacher education and the teacher's self-development become very paramount. Teacher education programmes should be re-designed to focus more attention on technological and entrepreneurial education. Teachers already in service should seek for ways of professional development especially in the area of ICT training so as to be relevant in the present educational status in Nigeria. The Nigerian teacher should know that much is expected of him at present and the only way to fulfill this expectation is by professional self-development.

THE ATMOSPHERE FOR SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER

The general attitude to teachers is so poor that even some good teachers lose confidence in themselves. There is, therefore, the need to build traditional support for teachers. The key people in this effort are the administrators of the schools; principals, headmasters, head teachers, supervisors etc. These people have to recognize the useful things that teachers bring to the school after in-service training courses and so not only encourage them to be interested in such programmes but also respect them for the opportunity of benefiting from them. The purpose of

creating the learning environment is to encourage effective teacher development. The success of creating the learning environment for our teachers depends upon the concerted efforts of the teacher himself, the head teachers, the supervisor and other educational administrators. The generally public is expected to lend their support through the due process of social control of education instead of leaving it entirely in the hands of government.

MEANS OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER

There are many means of professional development of teachers. Some of them are:

- a. *Workshops*: Workshops for teachers are more popular these days. They are practical in purpose and can be used to cover many aspects of professional development. Workshops do not take definite patterns; their organization depends on the purpose to be achieved. The type of teaching experience to be gained is clearly specified and the need for them is generally shared by the participant teachers. During the workshop, the teacher is expected to be a clear-thinking individual who searched for other efficient ways of providing educational opportunities for himself-willingness to work with other people, readiness to think for himself, the desire to build general and specific knowledge for use in seeking solution to his own and his school's problems.
- b. *Demonstration lesson*: The nature of teaching is such that many people think that it should be development through the apprenticeship system. The implication is that there are master teachers from whom novices to the profession must learn the act of teaching. It gives young a teachers the chance to look at experts at work and also to ask questions. Demonstration lessons are as old as teaching itself. A good demonstration lesson is useful both to the demonstrator as well as the observers. In the first place, it offers a challenge to the demonstrator. That he has been called upon to demonstrate gives him a sense of pride because he is so good in his work that what he has to offer the observers is appreciated by his colleagues. He is thus motivated to prepare well by making sure of the knowledge he has to impart. On the part of the observers, they learn a variety of teaching styles and so develop their own teaching methods.
- c. *Peer-group teaching through inter-class visits*: This is an informal exercise by means of which groups of aspiring teachers can raise the standard of their professional performance. Here, the group decides on what to look for in each lesson delivered by members e.g. class management and control, the art of questioning, competence in subject matter, appropriateness of learning activities, etc. The major advantage here is the total involvement of individuals in the planning of the program. They teach in turns until the group is covered.
- d. *Teachers' study Groups*: The work of these groups depend upon the needs of their members. The teachers can concentrate on subject matter curriculum issues, forces that impinge on the teaching profession, problems of teachers, etc. The main purpose of study groups is to make teachers professionally insightful and change their classroom practices for the better.
- e. *Refresher Courses*: These courses are generally organized by training colleges for their old students. It was an opportunity to meet old friends. Selected speakers are made to address them on the chosen topic. They generally last for a few days and the courses are ended with old boys' meetings.
- f. *Staff meetings*: Sometime ago, the teachers professional awareness was limited to classroom activities but today his educational activities go far beyond the classroom. The administrative policy of a good school should stress the contribution of all teachers in the school and their suggestions in school work. Participation in staff meeting is therefore a positive factor in the school situation. It is at the staff meeting that teachers-to-teacher relationships are tested. For staff meetings to be successful, all professional ethics must be fully observed.
- g. *Private Academic Pursuits*: Some ambitious teachers upgrade themselves through private study. While it is worthwhile to encourage teachers in these directions, they are advised to consider seriously the types of programs offered and those they can best profit by. These days, there are also study leave facilities for teachers. Many teachers have improved upon their grades and status in this way.
- h. *Professional Reading*: A good teacher must always be an avid reader. It is difficult to see how a teacher can inspire his class if he is always short of new ideas. Unfortunately, most of our teachers do not read. Visits to their homes reveal that most of the books in their libraries consist of those professional books they read years ago at college or university which are now badly out of date. The strongest support of professional reading is a good library. Head teachers and principals should ensure that they have functional libraries in their schools for both staff and students.

ACTION PLANNING AND THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

There is an inspirational adage that says "people don't plan to fail. Instead, they fail to plan". Because you

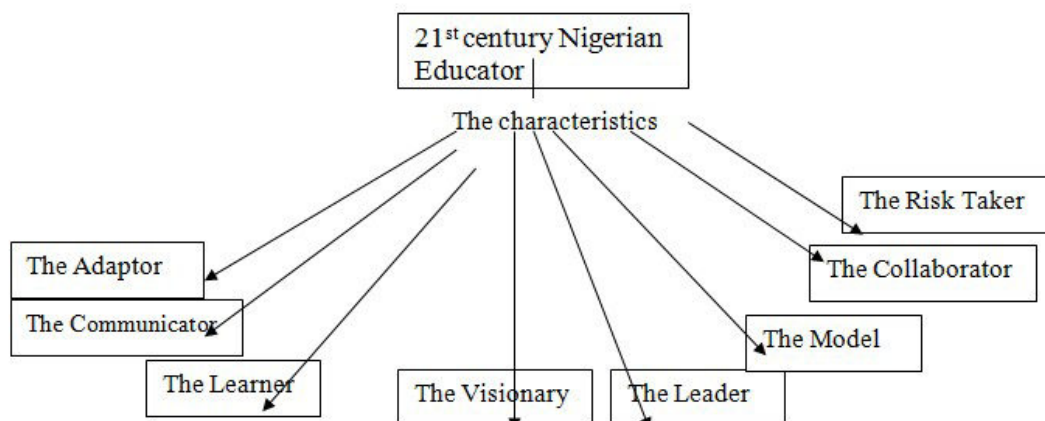
certainly don't want to fail, it makes sense to take all necessary steps to ensure success, including developing an action plan. Action planning is the process that guides the day to day activities of an organization or an individual. It is the process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done, and what resources or inputs are needed to do it. It is the process of operating your strategic objectives. For teachers, the following stages are involved in the action plan.

- a. WHERE AM I NOW? This is where you review your achievements and progress and undertake' self-assessment.
- b. WHERE DO I WANT TO BE? This is where you decide your goals.
- c. HOW DO I GET THERE? This is where you define the strategy you will use to achieve your goals, and to break down your goal into smaller discrete steps you will need to take to achieve your target.
- d. TAKING ACTION: This is the vital area where you implement your plan. To achieve the above, teachers should employ the 21 Century skills.

UTILIZING THE 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

Technology advancement have touched every facet of life including education. Therefore, teachers who do not use social media and educational technology in their teaching no longer fit into the new system. That is why every educator and teacher should reconsider certain values and principles, hence the need for professional development of Nigerian teachers in the 21st Century.

The diagram below shows eight characteristics of the 21st century Nigerian teacher.



1. **The Risk Taker**

Nigerian teachers should not wait for others to take the initiative, they have to take the lead. Show your students that everything can be learnt through risk and initiative taking. Your students are bound to trust you and this trust is the key to better learning. Also, trust your students that they can do it.

2. **The Collaborator**

The central theme in your work should always be collaboration. Ensure that your students are actively involved in the teaching-learning process. Collaboration involves sharing, contributing, adapting and inventing tools to enhance and captivate our learners.

3. **The Model**

Teachers' job is not just to pass information to students but they are also there to give the exemplary model of how the lifelong learner should be. Students are very much influenced by their teachers' behaviours. Therefore, the 21st century Nigerian teacher needs to model several characteristics such as:

- Reflective thinking and practice
- Tolerance
- Coexistence
- Affection, love, tenderness
- Love of technology and digital information
- Global awareness

There is an expectation that Nigerian teachers will teach values, and so they must model the behaviours which they expect from their students.

4. **The Leader**

The 21st century Nigerian teacher should demonstrate good leadership. There is no doubt that the present crisis in our nation is as a result of the leadership question at all levels of our national life. Leadership is crucial to the success or failure of any project. Among the many challenges that Nigerian teachers face the most

difficult is how to engage students who resist learning activities. The Nigerian teacher is encouraged to help students develop intrinsic motivation.

5. **The Visionary**

The 21st century Nigerian teacher should be imaginative. He needs to foresee the potential of the emerging technologies, look into other areas of the curricula and across disciplines, make links that enhance and value learning in other fields to leverage his knowledge and his teaching and the learning of his students.

6. **The Leaner**

Learning is a continuous process, a life long commitment to knowledge. Nigerian teachers should always seek knowledge everywhere using technology. The world is dynamic and the horizons and landscapes are changing, so do the teachers' needs and skills. The Nigerian teacher should endeavour to stay current. To be a teacher, you must learn and adapt as the horizons and landscapes change.

7. **The Communicator**

The 21st century Nigerian teacher should be fluent in the use of communication and information technologies, know how to facilitate, stimulate, control, moderate and manage them. It should be noted that, to have anywhere, anytime learning, the teacher must be anywhere and anytime.

8. **The Adaptor**

Different as they are the modes of learning, Nigerian teachers should always make their teaching styles adaptive to:

- The curriculum requirements
- The various age groups and abilities
- The new dynamic teaching experiences

CONCLUSION

Professional development is a broad term, encompassing a range of people, interests and approaches. Those who engage in a professional development share a common purpose of enhancing their ability to do their work. At the heart of professional development is the individual's interest in life-long learning and increasing their own skills and knowledge. Thus, well-educated teachers, and not merely trained certificated teachers, make good schools. To be well educated requires that the Nigerian teacher engages in continuous professional development as long as he remains on the job. As teachers, we should always try our best especially in establishing caring relationships with our students and this will help them to build self-confidence and face their learning with enthusiasm.

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