Bridging CPD Gaps: A Comparative Analysis of English Language Lecturers' Professional Development Needs in Nigerian Colleges of Education

Dalladi B. Umar
Department of English
Jigawa State College of Educationand Legal Studies, P.M.B. 1009 Ringim

Abstract: *Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is critical to enhancing the pedagogical competence and professional growth of English language lecturers in teacher education institutions. However, in Nigeria, lecturers in Colleges of Education face persistent challenges in accessing structured CPD opportunities, including inadequate institutional support, limited funding, and overreliance on donor-driven initiatives. This paper presents a conceptual analysis of the professional development needs of English lecturers in two Colleges of Education in Jigawa State, situating the discussion within global best practices for teacher education. Drawing on recent literature and international competency frameworks, the paper highlights five essential CPD domains: pedagogical knowledge, language proficiency, assessment literacy, digital teaching competence, and professional values. It argues for the adoption of sustainable, institutionally driven CPD models—such as mentorship, reflective practice, peer observation, and blended learning approaches—that align with both local needs and international standards. The paper contributes a theoretical framework for strengthening CPD in Nigerian Colleges of Education, providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and development partners. Ultimately, it underscores the urgent need to institutionalize CPD as a strategic component of teacher education reforms to improve the quality of English language instruction and better prepare future teachers for 21st-century classrooms.*
Keywords: continuous professional development, English language lecturers, teacher education, Nigeria, professional growth

INTRODUCTION

Background of CPD and English language teaching

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is widely recognized as a vital mechanism for improving teacher competence and student learning outcomes across educational systems

worldwide (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002). In English language teaching, CPD plays an essential role in equipping lecturers with updated pedagogical knowledge, innovative assessment strategies, and digital literacy skills needed for effective instruction in the 21st century (Richards & Farrell, 2005; Burns, 2010). Effective CPD fosters reflective practice, encourages collaborative learning, and supports teachers in adopting learner-centered approaches that enhance language acquisition and communicative competence (Fullan, 2007).

Context of Nigeria and teacher education
In Nigeria, Colleges of Education serve as the primary institutions responsible for preparing teachers for the nation's basic education system (NCCE, 2020). English language lecturers in these institutions are expected to possess not only strong language proficiency but also up-to-date pedagogical expertise to train future teachers effectively (Adeyanju, 2020). However, CPD for lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education remains poorly institutionalized, with most training opportunities dependent on donor-funded programs such as the Teacher Development Programme (TDP) and the Strengthening Teachers' English Proficiency (STEP) initiative (British Council Nigeria, 2017; DFID, 2019).

Problem statement (gap in CPD opportunities)
Existing studies have shown that many English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education face significant barriers to accessing structured CPD programs, including inadequate institutional support, irregular funding, and a lack of sustainable policy frameworks (Akindele, 2019; Omojuwa & Abubakar, 2021). These challenges have resulted in limited exposure to contemporary teaching methodologies and reduced opportunities for professional growth (Aminu, 2023; Yusuf & Bala, 2023). Consequently, lecturers often rely on outdated teaching practices, which negatively affect the quality of English language instruction and the competence of future teachers.

Purpose and significance of the paper
This paper seeks to examine the professional development needs of English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education and to propose a conceptual framework for strengthening CPD in alignment with international best practices. Drawing on the Cambridge English Teaching Framework and other global CPD models, the paper argues for sustainable, context-responsive strategies that can enhance lecturers' teaching capacity while reducing dependency on external donor support (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023). By integrating global evidence with the Nigerian teacher education context, this study contributes to the discourse on improving teacher quality and informs policymakers, institutional leaders, and education partners on practical approaches for institutionalizing CPD.

Research questions
This paper is guided by the following research questions:
1. What are the core professional development needs of English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education?
2. How can a competency-based framework adapted from international models be contextualized to strengthen CPD for these lecturers?
3. What policy and institutional strategies are required to ensure sustainable CPD implementation in Nigerian teacher education institutions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept and Significance of CPD in English Language Teaching

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is defined as an ongoing, reflective process whereby educators maintain and enhance their professional capabilities throughout their careers (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). In English language teaching, CPD strengthens pedagogical knowledge, assessment literacy, and digital competence, helping teachers respond effectively to technological and methodological shifts in language education (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Research demonstrates that effective CPD is contextually relevant, collaborative, and sustained—rather than episodic—to support transformative changes in practice (Fullan, 2007; Vadivel et al., 2021).

CPD Models and Approaches in Teacher Education

International CPD frameworks emphasize structured development across defined competence domains. For example, the Cambridge English Teaching Framework provides progressive levels—from Foundation to Expert—in domains such as Learning & the Learner, Teaching, Learning & Assessment, Language Ability, Language Knowledge, and Professional Development & Values (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023). Action research is widely acknowledged as an effective CPD modality, engaging teachers in cycles of reflection and classroom experimentation (Balogun, 2023). Similarly, recent studies underscore the importance of professional learning communities, peer observation, and blended learning approaches in fostering sustained CPD impact (Vadivel et al., 2021).

Empirical Evidence on CPD Needs in Nigeria

Balogun, Murana, and Omwirhiren (2022) examined CPD practices among English lecturers in Nigeria's North West zone and found that CPD engagement is weak, irregular, and poorly aligned with international standards. They recommended consistent mentorship, annual conferences, team teaching, and faculty seminars to foster lecturer development. Another study by Balogun (2023) emphasized Classroom Action Research (CAR) as a reflective CPD practice enabling lecturers to identify challenges and apply solutions in real-time teaching contexts. Findings from other Nigerian contexts highlight that lecturer readiness for emerging digital demands—such as online instruction—is low, and institutions lack systematic ICT training for staff (Ganiyu & Kolawole, 2023).

Gaps in Existing Literature

Despite these insights, the literature reveals several key gaps. First, few studies articulate how well-recognized global frameworks can be localized to Nigeria's unique educational context. Second, while research identifies the existence of barriers—such as funding shortages and institutional constraints—it rarely proposes structured competency frameworks or pathways for sustainable in-house CPD. Third, empirical focus tends to be on primary or secondary contexts; systematic research on English lecturers in teacher training institutions like Colleges of Education remains limited.

Synthesis

Taken together, these streams of literature suggest that Nigerian English language lecturers face substantial professional development needs that are both pedagogical and technological. Most existing CPD remains external, ad hoc, or insufficiently contextualized. Meanwhile, global evidence shows that competency-based frameworks, action research, peer learning, and blended models yield better outcomes when integrated consistently. Hence, developing a localized yet internationally-informed CPD framework holds promise—but requires deeper conceptual articulation and policy alignment.

Conceptual Framework

The Cambridge English Teaching Framework

The **Cambridge English Teaching Framework** outlines five core domains of teacher competence: Learning & the Learner, Teaching, Learning & Assessment, Language Ability, Language Knowledge & Awareness, and Professional Development & Values (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023; Cambridge English Teaching Framework, n.d.). Each domain is stratified into four developmental stages—Foundation, Developing, Proficient, and Expert—creating a structured, progressive profile of teacher growth (Cambridge English Teaching Framework, n.d.; Cambridge English Teaching Framework, n.d) The framework enables lecturers to assess their current proficiency, set realistic targets, and access resources aligned to their developmental phase (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023).

In an international context, such structured competency frameworks support coherent professional growth and align CPD activities with broader educational standards (Fullan, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, such frameworks have rarely been adapted to the specific institutional and infrastructural realities of teacher education in Nigeria.

Localization to Nigerian Colleges of Education

To make this framework relevant to **English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education**, the following adaptations are proposed:

- **Domain mapping**: Map local CPD needs to the five framework domains—for instance, digital teaching competence fits within both Language Knowledge and Professional Development domains.
- **Stage calibration**: Define institutional proficiency stages—for example, lecturers may initially be at Foundation level in digital literacy due to limited training access (Ganiyu & Kolawole, 2023).
- **Targeted CPD strategies**: Recommend mentorship, action research, peer observation, and blended learning to help lecturers progress through stages in each domain. These strategies respond to empirical needs observed in Nigeria (Balogun et al., 2022; Balogun, Murana, & Omwirhiren, 2022).

Addressing Identified Needs Through Framework

Based on empirical findings, lecturers in Jigawa State Colleges of Education typically require development in the following areas:

- **Pedagogical innovation** (Teaching, Learning & Assessment)
- **Digital teaching proficiency** (Professional Development & Language Knowledge)

- **Reflective research engagement** (Professional Development & Values)

These align directly with the competencies described at each stage of the Cambridge framework. Table 1 (see below) illustrates a localized mapping of stages, domains, and CPD strategies tailored to the Nigerian context.

Table 1. Localized Competency Profile for Nigerian English Lecturers

Domain	Foundation (Entry) Needs	Developing/Proficient Practices
Learning & the Learner	Basic knowledge of pedagogy	Peer observation, micro-teaching cycles
Teaching, Learning & Assessment	Traditional assessment methods only	Collaborative lesson planning, modern assessment literacy
Language Ability & Knowledge	General proficiency, limited CEFR awareness	CEFR-aligned workshops, academic writing seminars
Professional Development & Values	Minimal reflective practice, few networks	Mentorship, faculty learning communities, action research

This structured approach anchors CPD efforts within career progression pathways, enabling lecturers—and institutions—to monitor development and tailor interventions effectively.

Conceptual Model Visualization
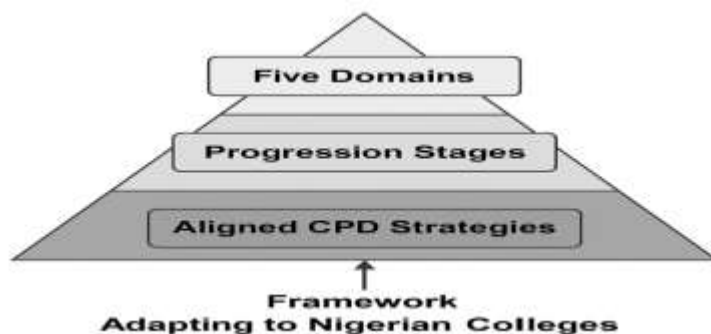
The pyramid or layered triangle visually organizes these domains to show that **effective teaching builds upward**, starting with learner knowledge and pedagogy, supported by language ability and awareness, and culminating in on-going professional growth.

By aligning local CPD deficits with the Cambridge framework's domains and stages, this conceptual model provides a robust, theoretically-grounded pathway for sustainable professional development. It directly addresses identified gaps by offering clear mapping from needs into practice strategies and institutional support mechanisms.

DISCUSSION

Addressing Key CPD Needs

The conceptual framework highlights the pressing need for structured, progressive CPD for English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education. Empirical studies confirm that lecturers often lack access to meaningful professional growth opportunities due to poor institutional support, irregular funding, and reliance on outdated teaching methods (Akindele,

2019; Omojuwa & Abubakar, 2021). The localized adaptation of the Cambridge English Teaching Framework provides a roadmap for building lecturer competencies across essential domains, including pedagogy, assessment literacy, digital proficiency, and reflective professional practice (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023; Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Strategies for Sustainable CPD Implementation
Global research shows that CPD is most effective when it is collaborative, sustained, and integrated into institutional culture (Fullan, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). For Nigerian Colleges of Education, four key strategies emerge as crucial:
1. **Mentorship and Coaching** – Establishing formal mentoring programs where senior lecturers guide junior colleagues can foster reflective practice and practical knowledge transfer (Balogun et al., 2022).
2. **Action Research and Reflective Practice** – Encouraging lecturers to conduct classroom-based research enhances their ability to identify pedagogical challenges and experiment with evidence-based solutions (Burns, 2010; Balogun, 2023).
3. **Peer Observation and Professional Learning Communities** – Collaborative approaches, including peer lesson observations and departmental workshops, can improve teaching quality and accountability (Richards & Farrell, 2005).
4. **Blended and Technology-Enhanced Learning** – Given the global shift towards digital instruction, training lecturers in online teaching tools and learning management systems is essential for future-ready teacher education (Ganiyu & Kolawole, 2023).

Institutional and Policy Implications
For this framework to succeed, CPD must transition from donor-driven, episodic programs to institutionalized systems embedded within Colleges of Education (Yusuf & Bala, 2023). College management should allocate annual budgets for CPD, integrate CPD participation into promotion criteria, and establish partnerships with professional organizations for resource support (Aminu, 2023). At the policy level, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should develop enforceable guidelines mandating CPD participation and provide incentives for innovative lecturer development initiatives (NCCE, 2020).

Comparative and Global Relevance
The localized framework is also significant for broader sub-Saharan contexts facing similar challenges in CPD implementation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). By integrating international best practices with local realities, the model demonstrates how competency frameworks can be adapted for resource-constrained environments, thereby offering transferable lessons for other teacher education systems.

Policy and Practice Implications

Institutional-Level Implications
1. **Establishment of Structured CPD Frameworks:** Colleges of Education should adopt a competency-based framework, such as the localized Cambridge English Teaching Framework, to guide lecturers' professional growth. Clear developmental stages and performance indicators should be integrated into staff appraisal systems (Cambridge Assessment English, 2023).

2. **Budgetary Provision for CPD:** Institutions must allocate dedicated funds for CPD activities, including workshops, conferences, mentorship programs, and digital training. Linking CPD participation to promotion and appraisal will incentivize continuous engagement (Yusuf & Bala, 2023).
3. **Faculty Learning Communities:** Departments should establish peer-learning communities to promote collaborative lesson planning, action research, and reflective practice. Such communities foster knowledge sharing and mutual accountability (Fullan, 2007).

Policy-Level Implications
1. **Mandatory CPD Participation:** The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should revise its regulatory framework to mandate annual CPD participation as a prerequisite for promotion or tenure (NCCE, 2020).
2. **Accreditation Benchmarks for CPD:** Accreditation standards should include institutional provisions for CPD to ensure Colleges of Education meet national teacher quality goals (Adeyanju, 2020).
3. **Incentive Schemes for Innovation:** Policymakers should introduce grant schemes or awards for lecturers who demonstrate innovation in English language teaching through research, digital integration, or curriculum reform (Aminu, 2023).

Implications for Development Partners
1. **Transition from Donor-Dependency to Institutional Ownership:** Development partners, such as the British Council, should support capacity-building efforts aimed at enabling Colleges of Education to independently sustain CPD programs (British Council Nigeria, 2017; DFID, 2019).
2. **Support for Digital CPD Platforms:** Donors and NGOs can provide seed funding and technical support for e-learning platforms, enabling lecturers to engage in flexible, self-paced CPD programs (Ganiyu & Kolawole, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is indispensable for ensuring that English language lecturers in Nigerian Colleges of Education acquire the pedagogical expertise, digital literacy, and reflective practices necessary for training future teachers. Despite existing policy frameworks, CPD participation in Nigeria remains irregular, poorly structured, and overly dependent on donor-funded initiatives. By adapting the Cambridge English Teaching Framework to the Nigerian context, this paper has proposed a competency-based model that aligns global best practices with local realities.

The framework emphasizes five domains—pedagogical knowledge, assessment literacy, language ability, language knowledge, and professional values—mapped across progressive developmental stages. It advocates for sustainable, institution-driven CPD approaches such as mentorship, action research, peer observation, and blended learning. These strategies, if systematically implemented, have the potential to bridge current professional gaps, enhance teaching quality, and improve student learning outcomes.

This conceptual paper contributes to the discourse on teacher quality reforms in Nigeria by providing a theoretically grounded roadmap for sustainable CPD implementation. Future research should empirically test the proposed framework in multiple Colleges of Education, evaluating its effectiveness and adaptability across diverse educational contexts. Such studies would generate evidence to inform policy reforms and capacity-building programs, ultimately strengthening teacher education in Nigeria and similar resource-constrained settings.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process
During the preparation of this work the author(s) used Copilot / Editing and paraphrase in order to Draft and review. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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