

Enhancing the Quality of Secondary Education Through Professional Development of Teachers in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated how to enhance the quality of secondary education through professional development of teachers in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study and one hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The descriptive survey research design guided the study. The population of the study comprised 5396 (5,133 teachers and 263 principals) in 263 public secondary schools in six Education Zones in Anambra State. A total of 579 respondents (513 teachers and 66 principals) were drawn through proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique for the study. Two validated structured questionnaires were used as a instrument for data collection. The application of Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient yielded coefficient values of 0.81 for teachers' professional development and 0.77 for quality in secondary education for the two instruments respectively with an overall coefficient value of 0.79 for internal consistency of the instrument. Mean, standard deviations and t-test were used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that engaging secondary school teachers in ongoing training workshops target at improving subject knowledge; establishing mentorship programmes for experienced and less experienced teachers so as to provide guidance and providing teachers with adequate time to study new techniques to improve their practice are TPD strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. The findings also show that dysfunctional school cultures, poor leadership commitment towards providing quality in secondary education, poor funding and lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails are some of the obstacles to professional development of teachers. Further findings revealed that teachers' professional development significantly enhances the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. The researchers therefore recommended among others that Government at all levels through the ministries of education should draw up a policy framework for teachers' professional development in secondary schools in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Professional Development, Teachers, Quality, Secondary Education, Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education is the education that learners receive after successfully completing nine years of basic education. Secondary education is important because it serves as a bridge between primary and higher education as well as an agent for educating students to live productive lives in society. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) stated that secondary school students range in age from 11 to 18 years. The FRN further stated that the broad aims of secondary education in Nigeria are to prepare students for useful living and for higher education. The secondary education system, in particular, is aimed to address inequities in talents, opportunities and future responsibilities while also providing technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial, and economic growth (FRN). Secondary schools must be able to provide quality education for students.

Quality can be broadly defined as the degree to which a product, service, process, or system meets or exceeds established standards, regulations, or expectations, thereby fulfilling the needs and desires of its stakeholders. This encompasses various characteristics such as reliability, effectiveness, efficiency, consistency, relevance, and satisfaction of customers. In the realm of business education, quality entails a multifaceted approach aimed at delivering excellence, relevance and efficacy in preparing individuals for success in the dynamic business environment. It involves adhering to or surpassing set standards, addressing the changing needs of stakeholders, and promoting continuous enhancement. Bratianu et al (2020) assert that it involves aligning the curriculum with industry standards and emerging trends, employing effective teaching methodologies, developing faculty competencies, achieving desired student outcomes, engaging with industry stakeholders, and embracing a culture of ongoing improvement. In secondary education, quality encompasses the preparation of students with practical skills, competencies, and ethical values, as highlighted by Sinaga et al (2020). This includes promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, adaptability, fostering a global perspective, and nurturing cultural awareness. Quality in secondary education is defined by the extent to which the programme meets or exceeds all requisites, standards, and specifications, thereby enabling educators to enhance students' academic performance and skills while effectively collaborating with colleagues and school administrators (Thareja, 2017). Quality in secondary education refers to the extent to which an educational programme fulfils or surpasses defined standards, criteria, and expectations, eventually contributing to students' overall growth. It entails providing pupils with a well-rounded education that instills in them the information, skills, competences, and values required for academic success, future jobs, and personal fulfilment. Quality in secondary education includes effective teaching practices, relevant and engaging curriculum, supportive learning environments, opportunities for student growth and exploration, equitable access to resources and opportunities, and the promotion of critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional development. Furthermore, it entails cultivating a culture of continual improvement and innovation to guarantee that the educational

experience stays responsive to the changing demands of the students and society. The realization of quality in secondary education is dependent on teachers.

Teachers are at the core of efforts to attain educational goals and objectives at all levels. Teachers play important roles in ensuring the realization of educational goals. They serve as guides, mentors, and facilitators, establishing important information, skills, and attitudes in their students. Teachers play crucial roles in creating and delivering curricular content that is current, entertaining, and meet industry requirements (Anike, 2023). Secondary school teachers not only teach academic concepts, but also provide practical, real-world insights based on their own experiences and knowledge. They provide a pleasant learning environment in which students may explore, experiment, and apply their knowledge. Furthermore, these teachers offer individualised guidance and feedback, supporting students in understanding their own skills, limitations and areas for improvement. Their productivity determines the productivity of the institution (Utami & Vioreza, 2021) which depends on their professional development activities (Ali & Shafeeq, 2021).

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) as a systematic method aimed at instigating changes in teachers' classroom practices, which encompasses their attitudes, skills, knowledge, beliefs and the outcomes of student learning (Awodjii et al., 2020). Creemers et al., cited in Awodjii et al., adopted a functionalist perspective, characterizing TPD as technical procedures designed to assist teachers in enhancing their delivery of services to clients or students. Boddard, as mentioned in Awodjii et al. (2020), regarded TPD as a crucial aspect of quality that aligns individual teacher needs with the challenges of their job. The motivation for teachers to continuously engage in learning throughout their careers serves as the foundation for professional accountability and ensures a sense of responsibility. Utami and Vioreza (2021) stated that teacher professional development involves the accumulation of formal and informal learning experiences within a stimulating educational environment marked by complexity and dynamic change. A recurring theme in these definitions is the emphasis on ongoing learning, wherein educators continually acquire knowledge, skills, and values to sustain their intellectual vitality, ultimately enhancing the quality of teaching and improving students' learning outcomes. Teacher professional development comprises planned organizational activities designed to enrich and broaden teachers' skills, knowledge, concepts, attitudes, and behaviors, enabling them to fulfill the demands of the teaching profession (Weli & Ollor, 2021). It focuses on enhancing both intellectual and practical conceptual skills necessary for effective performance. Thus, while the immediate objective of staff development is to enhance the performance of individuals with teaching and management responsibilities, its overarching goal is to enhance teaching and learning processes. TPD serves as a paradigm for improving teachers' personal and institutional skills, knowledge, and capacities through training, career development, coaching, and mentoring. Teacher development programmes are critical for human capital development because they promote the smart use and sustainability of resources in national and institutional contexts. They include a wide range of activities such as Training for Higher Qualification (THQ), ongoing education, mentorship,

coaching systems, seminars, workshops, conferences, and staff exchange programmes (Awodiji & Ijaiya, 2019). These programmes include a variety of activities such as ongoing educational programmes, seminars, coaching, and more (Awodiji, 2018), and when recognised and implemented successfully, they considerably improve individual teachers' ability to fulfil their present duties more effectively.

To this end, Darling-Hammond et al (2017) noted that it is important to adopt strategies that would facilitate and promote teachers professional development. Previous research on professional development has presented a variety of strategies for professional development programmes (Wetzel, 2019; Ploeger, 2019), as well as a wide range of learning outcomes (Thomson et al., 2019). According to Thurlings and Brok (2017), there are three main forms of professional development based on the degree and nature of the activities engaged;

- i. Coaching: This is a TPD activity where an experienced individual provides support to another individual, such as through peer coaching and feedback
- ii. Collaborating: This is a situation where larger groups work together towards a common goal or product, as seen in communities of practice and lesson study (Patton & Parker, 2017).
- iii. Assessment: This involves evaluating learning progress either formatively or summatively, with collaboration playing a role in the assessment process, as observed in peer assessment and review.

The successful execution of a professional development (PD) effort has a substantial impact on its potential to improve teaching practices and student learning results. Scholars have discovered that even highly motivated instructors may fail to implement PD methods owing to extrinsic difficulties (Tooley & Connally, 2016). Even if PD programmes are well-designed, they may fall short of their intended outcomes if hampered by several hurdles, such as:

- a. Insufficient resources, including the essential instructional materials.
- b. Lack of agreement on what constitutes high-quality instruction. There is little time available for introducing new educational approaches during the school day or academic year.
- c. Misalignment of state and municipal policies on teaching procedures.
- d. Disruptive school cultures.
- e. Inability to adequately monitor and assess the effectiveness of professional development initiatives.

Effective professional development entails addressing the unique needs of teachers and learners, as well as the school and district settings. Anticipate and plan for common professional development challenges during the design and implementation phases. It is therefore against this

background that the researchers conducted this study to determine how teachers' professional development can enhance the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Teacher professional development is increasingly recognized as a vital tool to support students' mastery of complex skills required for success in the twenty-first century. To cultivate abilities such as deep understanding of challenging subjects, critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, teamwork, and self-direction, sophisticated teaching methods are essential. Consequently, effective teacher professional development (TPD) is crucial to help educators learn and refine instructional practices necessary for teaching these skills. However, research indicates that many TPD efforts fail to bring about significant changes in teachers' practices and student learning outcomes. Additionally, there appears to be a lack of emphasis on promoting teachers' professional development among secondary school administrators in Nigeria. Instances where administrators discourage teachers from enrolling in higher education programs exemplify this apparent disinterest. Such disregard for teachers' professional growth could negatively impact the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine how teachers' professional development enhances the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. Specifically, the study;

1. Ascertained teachers' professional development strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.
2. Determined the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the teachers' professional development strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria?
2. What are the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Teachers' professional development does not significantly enhance quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

METHOD

The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey research is the design which aims at collecting data and describing in a

systematic manner, the characteristics, features or facts about a given population. The population of the study comprised 5396 (5,133 teachers and 263 principals) in 263 public secondary schools in six Education Zones in Anambra State. A total of 579 respondents (513 teachers and 66 principals) were drawn through proportionate stratified and simple random sampling technique for the study. The sample size comprised 10% of teachers and 25% population of principals. The choice of 10-25% was in line with the recommendations of Nworgu (2015) who stated that 10 to 80 percent of any given population is adequate for the research work. Two structured instruments were used for data collection. The first questionnaire was titled "Questionnaire on Teachers Professional Development (QTPD). The instrument is made up of two sections: A and B. Section A elicited information on the personal data of the respondents while section B is divided into two clusters. Cluster B1 contains 10 items Teachers professional Development for enhancing quality of secondary education while cluster B2 contains 7 items on the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. The items were placed on 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The range of scores were weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

The second was Questionnaire on Quality in Secondary Education (QQSE). The questionnaire contains 10 items which sought information on indicators of quality in secondary education. The items were placed on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The ranges of scores were weighted as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instruments were validated by three experts. Two experts in Educational management and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Department of Educational Foundations, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, validated the instruments. The instruments were trial-tested using a single administration on a representative sample of 20 teachers randomly selected from public secondary schools in Enugu state. The schools were chosen for the test because they share similar characteristics with the schools in the area of study. After they had responded to the instruments, the completed copies were collated to determine the internal consistency of the items in each instrument. This was done using Cronbach Alpha.

The reliability coefficient values of 0.81 for teachers' professional development and 0.77 for Quality in Secondary Education were obtained. Thus, an overall coefficient value of 0.79 was obtained. The researchers administered the instruments to the respondents with the help of three research assistants. Out of the 579 copies of questionnaire administered, 528 copies were returned in good condition. This amounted to 91 percent questionnaire return rate. The loss of 51 copies of the instrument representing 9 percent questionnaire lose did not affect the analysis of data. Thus, the researcher utilized the 528 copies of questionnaire for the analysis of data for the study. To answer the research questions, the mean value was used. The standard deviation was used to check the homogeneity or disparity in the respondents mean ratings. The decision rule was based on the real limits of numbers on the 4- point rating scale as shown below;

Response	Values	Real Limit of numbers
Strongly Agree	4	3.5 – 4.00
Agree	3	2.5 – 3.49
Disagree	2	1.5 – 2.49
Strongly Disagree	1	0.5 – 1.49

For the hypotheses, t-test was used at 0.05 level of significance. Where the p-value was less than the significant alpha level of 0.05, it means that the variable significantly affected respondents mean ratings and the hypothesis was rejected. Conversely, where the p-value was equal to or greater than the significant alpha level of 0.05, it means that the variable did not significantly influence the respondents' mean ratings and hypothesis was accepted.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What are the teachers' professional development strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria?

Table 1

Respondents Mean rating on Teachers' Professional Development Strategies for Enhancing the Quality of Secondary Education (N=528)

S/N	Item Descriptions	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Engaging secondary school teachers in ongoing training workshops target at improving subject knowledge	3.40	.89	Agree
2	Allowing teachers to participate in peer collaboration group where they can share ideas with colleagues on best practices	3.32	.76	Agree
3	Establishing mentorship programmes for experienced and less experienced teachers so as to provide guidance	3.38	.86	Agree
4	Embracing technology resources to enhance teaching effectiveness by engaging students on interactive learning experiences.	3.24	.70	Agree
5	Promoting active learning which provides teachers with opportunities to get hands-on experience designing and practicing new teaching strategies	3.09	.77	Agree
6	Designing curricular models which provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like	3.28	.72	Agree
7	Providing regular and consistent feedback to teachers on their teaching activities	3.12	.78	Agree

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8	Providing teachers with adequate time to study new techniques to improve their practice.	3.32	.80	Agree
9	Providing teachers with the time to apply new techniques to improve their practice.	3.20	.85	Agree
10	Offering opportunities for self-reflection to evaluate teaching effectiveness	3.11	.90	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.24		Agree

Data in Table 1 reveal that the respondents rated items 1-10 as teachers' professional development strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria with mean ratings between 3.09 and 3.40. The standard deviation scores ranging between .72 and .90 indicate that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster mean of 3.24 indicate that engaging secondary school teachers in ongoing training workshops target at improving subject knowledge; establishing mentorship programmes for experienced and less experienced teachers so as to provide guidance; providing teachers with adequate time to study new techniques to improve their practice; allowing teachers to participate in peer collaboration group where they can share ideas with colleagues on best practices and designing curricular models which provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like among others are TPD strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What are the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria?

Table 2

Respondents Mean rating on the Obstacles of Teachers' Professional Development in Enhancing the Quality of Secondary Education in Nigeria (N=528)

S/N	Item Descriptions	Mean	SD	Remarks
11	Lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails	3.16	.82	Agree
12	Failure to align state and local policies toward a coherent set of instructional practices	3.08	.80	Agree
13	Poor leadership commitment towards providing quality in secondary education	3.21	.90	Agree
14	Dysfunctional school cultures	3.33	.87	Agree
15	Poor funding	3.17	.76	Agree
16	Failure to monitor the quality of professional development	2.89	.81	Agree
17	Inadequate resources	3.12	.70	Agree
Cluster Mean		3.13		Agree

Data in Table 2 reveal that the respondents rated items 11-17 as the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria with mean ratings between 2.89 and 3.33. The standard deviation scores ranging between .70 and .90 indicate that the respondents' opinions were related. The cluster mean of 3.13 indicate that dysfunctional school cultures, poor leadership commitment towards providing quality in secondary education, poor funding, lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails and inadequate resources were some of the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

Hypothesis

Teachers' professional development does not significantly enhance quality of secondary education in Nigeria.

Table 3

Summary of t-test Analysis on the significant influence of Teachers Professional Development in Enhancing Quality of Secondary Education in Nigeria

Variables	Mean	SD	df	α	t-value	P-value	Decision
Teachers Professional Development	3.38	0.90	527	0.05	23.11	0.00	Significant
Quality in Secondary Education	3.48	0.96					

Data in Table 3 showed that the p-value of 0.00 is less than 0.05 alpha level of significance. This means that teachers' professional development significantly enhance quality of secondary education in Nigeria, therefore the hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study revealed that engaging secondary school teachers in ongoing training workshops target at improving subject knowledge; establishing mentorship programmes for experienced and less experienced teachers so as to provide guidance; providing teachers with adequate time to study new techniques to improve their practice; allowing teachers to participate in peer collaboration group where they can share ideas with colleagues on best practices and designing curricular models which provide teachers with a clear vision of what best practices look like among others are TPD strategies for enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. These findings show that engaging in professional development strategies would facilitate improvement in the administration, teaching and learning process in secondary schools in Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Awodiji (2018) who reported that TPD programmes include a

variety of activities such as ongoing educational programmes, seminars and coaching activities which when effectively implemented considerably improves teachers' ability to fulfil their present duties more effectively. In the same vein, Tooley and Connally (2016) averred that the successful execution of a professional development (PD) effort has a substantial impact on its potential to improve teaching practices and student learning results. This is further validated by the hypothesis which revealed that teachers' professional development significantly enhance quality of secondary education in Nigeria. This is in line with Weli and Ollor (2021) who stated that TPD focuses on enhancing both intellectual and practical conceptual skills necessary for effective performance.

The findings of the study revealed that dysfunctional school cultures, poor leadership commitment towards providing quality in secondary education, poor funding, lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails and inadequate resources were some of the obstacles of teachers' professional development in enhancing the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. This is in agreement with Darling-Hammond et al (2017) who noted that insufficient resources, including the essential instructional materials and lack of agreement on what constitutes high-quality instruction are some of the obstacles to effective implementation of teachers' professional development. Awodiji and Ijaiya (2019) stated that lack of leadership commitment towards teachers' professional development and poor funding are some of the factors limiting the effectiveness of teachers professional development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the study, the researchers conclude that teachers' professional development enhances the quality of secondary education in Nigeria. Exposing teachers to professional development programmes would enhance their capacity to develop new skills, methodologies and best practices in ensuring quality in the teaching and learning processes. Though it was discovered that there are some obstacles to effective implementation of teachers professional development in secondary schools like dysfunctional school cultures, poor leadership commitment towards providing quality in secondary education, poor funding and lack of a shared vision about what high-quality instruction entails. It is therefore imperative that measures are put in place to improve the practices of teachers' professional development in secondary in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

1. Government at all levels through the ministries of education should draw up a policy framework for teachers' professional development in secondary schools in Nigeria.
2. Government at all levels should make funding available for the conduct of teachers' professional development programmes in secondary schools in Nigeria.
3. Administrators of secondary schools should show strong commitment towards promoting teachers professional development in their schools by collaborating with other

administrators nationally and internationally to ensure the adoption of best practices by teachers.

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