

## **INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON CLASSROOM PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND NIGERIA**

---

**Ajani Oluwatoyin Ayodele**

[oaajani@gmail.com](mailto:oaajani@gmail.com)

Department of Curriculum and Instructional studies,  
Faculty of Education, University of Zululand,  
South Africa.

**Abstract:** *This paper investigates the influence of in service professional development on classroom instructional delivery of teachers in two African countries – South Africa and Nigeria. Theoretical frameworks were anchored on the assumptions from andragogy and experiential theories to explore needed in service trainings for the teachers. This study adopted mixed methodological approach with 80 teachers, two focus groups of 10 teachers and 6 HoDs from both countries. Findings of this study revealed that in service professional development activities actually promote enhanced classroom performance of teachers, which ensures academic improvement, the study also explains why teachers should access regular and relevant professional development that can promote teaching and learning in different contextual schools. Significant importance was focused on needs for relevant, quality and nature of in service (IPD) that can benefit their relevance and competency in the profession. The study also established the agitations of the teachers to be involved in the design and plan of various IPD activities that are meant for them to ensure application of IPD knowledge and skills in their classroom experience. They also called for Varieties of content and teaching method based IPD, learner-centred teaching skills and regular professional development structures IPD activities have been recommended by this study.*

**Keywords:** *professional development, In-service, academic improvement, quality education, empowerment.*

## **1. Introduction**

Teaching and learning are primary functions of education system; teachers are the facilitators of concrete learning in schools. Hence, there is need for the teachers to be competent enough to establish learning in their learners. When learning takes place in learners, this is known as education. Education is the key driver of developments in our society, no nation can attain development in any sphere of life without quality education to achieve or sustain these developments.

It is a global trend now that education receives prominent focus or attention in different parts of the global world, most especially the developed countries. It has been established that an effective approach to professional competencies of teachers is in service professional development (Fareo, 2013; Jika & Mokhele, 2014; Ravhuhali, 2014, Ajani, 2018). IPD encompasses different approaches to ensure and promote quality education in learners. Teachers' quality is importantly significant to education system. The quality of teachers has a significant impact on the improvement of learners' academic performance. Development of every society is critical to the available quality of education. The development propels what kind or level of education that should be provided for the society, the development anchors and is propelled by the quality of education available in the education system. Greatness of every nation depends on the available quality of education. No nation can be greater than the available quality of education in that system. African leaders have also realized that education system is a propelling factor for significant and meaningful development. Education, over the years has been receiving special/sizeable attention and facelift in African countries, government at all levels, has discovered that importance

of education and need to upgrade the system to follow suit like the developed countries. The quality of education in South African and Nigerian educational system presently determines the quality of present development in these countries. Individuals acquire knowledge; skills, values and other educative empowerment make them useful and fit in members of the society. They are prospectively prepared for variety of specialized responsibilities in economic, social, political, religious and other structures of the societies. Individuals become responsive, responsible and relevant through acquired skills.

To be functionally responsible for education towards development, which can only be facilitated by competent, versatile and functional teachers, several approaches are embarked upon to improve teachers through in service professional development activities. Professional development of teachers is fast gaining recognition and demand for regular and relevant IPD become non negotiable. Teacher education or professional development of teachers or continuing professional development effort are all same concepts of improving teachers for better instructional delivery tasks in schools. Motive behind IPD is to improve teachers for improved learners' academic performance. In service professional development of teachers refers to all interventions or initiatives that can enhance classroom instructions of teachers (Mkhwanazi, 2014). These development activities are available or made available to teachers for the whole duration of the professional career in teaching profession. It is to develop their teaching and learning tasks towards learners improved academic performance.

Quality education depends on quality of teachers, what teachers do not have, they cannot facilitate. Teachers can only make available to learners, quality of knowledge or skills. Knowledgeable and competent teachers can only develop or build intelligent or skillful learners who can be problem tasked learners. Achievement and sustenance of quality depend on effectiveness of teachers; teachers need to have regular experience of effective in service professional development trainings/activities by the

relevant bodies, individual scholars/experts, and other stakeholders. Teachers' mastery of the subjects gets improved and practical in classrooms due to skills acquired in professional development. Professional development activities can be used to multi-task teachers' intelligences for problem solving skills which can be adopted into their classroom practices.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Improved classroom performance of teachers and integration of effective model for improved classroom teaching skills necessitate this paper. The effectiveness and efficiency of various professional developments of teachers has been the significant propeller for need for regular and relevant professionalism of teachers across Africa (Ajani, 2018). Steyn (2013) calls for collaborations among teachers as an effective way of promoting effective better than the usual traditional belief of individual-teacher practice. Collaborations promote sharing of knowledge, ideas, skills, and values among teachers for better and improved instructional tasks delivery in various subject areas. It is strongly believed that teachers through appropriate in-service professional development learn better and faster while interacting with one another in the same fields of teaching (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001; Ajani, 2018).

Theory of andragogy qualifies learning of new knowledge by teachers in professional development as adult learning, learning in this theoretical perspective sees learner as adult learner who can learn easily as a prepared mind, set for new knowledge (Knowles, 1984).

These, Knowles in Ajani (2018) highlights four assumptions on which andragogy facilitates real and concrete learning in adult learners:

- (i) Teachers as adult learners need to know why he needs to learn what he needs to learn. Adult learner knows the purpose of his

learning, this enables him to concentrate and give full attention to learn the new knowledge or acquire new skills. Attendance of teachers in professional development is motivated by the need to be in that activity instead of being at the classroom.

- (ii) Experience is key to learning. Learning should be facilitated through experience. Firsthand experience or involvements in acquisition of knowledge by teachers prompts or promote in teachers to gain lasting and quicker learning though their experience with others in the venues.
- (iii) Learning to teachers is viewed as problem solving. Range of activities are given to teachers to engage at in the professional development activities that are andragogically based, the experience here, aids teachers to also engage their classroom learners in tasks that are problem- solving tasks.
- (iv) Beneficial learning is important. Relevance of the learning experience encourages application or adoption of IPD activities as immediate benefits of the professional development programme. Teachers want to know what benefits they stand to gain before attending such professional development.

### **3. Rationale for Teachers' Professional Development**

Teachers have the responsibilities to provide quality education that can build the nation. Education should be quality in nature despite being universally affordable to the masses in South African and Nigerian education systems. Teachers required to be developed just like other professionals that are given concurrent professional development (Ravhuhali, 2014). Society looks upon teachers to mould and build knowledgeable and skillful learners that can propel developments and solve problems in various facets of economy. Products of teachers are the citizenry that must be responsive and skillful for nation's manpower. These vast expectations demand that teachers are to be repositioned for better classroom instructions that can increase learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for optimum performance in the society.

Louise (2008) demands that teachers should be professional developed on regular basis in South Africa and Nigeria. Their responsibilities are challenging and demand regular professional development of teachers in Africa. He emphasizes:

- Professional development that promotes and builds teaching force that is vibrant, effective and modern to facilitate learning in modern and challenging contexts of Africa. It promotes researcher-teachers as problem solvers.
- Empowerment of teachers through modern skills to update existing human resource development in schools.
- Adherence to global trends of developing teachers for enhancement of learners' academic improvements.

Amadi (2008) agrees that human component forms the most important aspect of the resources in educational institutions. Incapacitated teachers in schools despite all the best infrastructures, sufficient funds and other non-human materials will result in poor academic performance of the learners.

#### **4. Focus of In-Service Professional Development Activities**

Professional development activities of teachers are to develop/improve teaching responsibilities, equip them with professional capacitation that ensure effective and efficient delivery of teaching and learning, which eventually lead to improve academic performance of students (Adesina, 2004).

It can be summarized that teachers, for them to be effective and fully actualize the goals of education in Nigeria, they deserve access to regular, well packaged and designed, effective and quality in-service professional development activities in every level of education. These professional

development activities are accessed through workshops, seminars, refresher courses/retreats, conferences and other professionally inclined activities for the teachers. The activities of IPD should focus on:

- Use and application of modern visual aids in teaching subject areas and empowerment of learners in the usage of same.
- Efficient and varied learner-centred approaches to teaching of their subjects in classrooms.
- Deep, highly intellectual and increased knowledge or skills in their specialized subjects in schools.
- Collaboration and professional networking among teachers in different locations of the world.
- Development of problem solving skills that grooms them as researchers in their teaching fields.
- Comparative of better academic performance of their learners.

## **5. Research Methodology**

Mixed methodological approach was used for this study to explore the influence of in service professional development on classroom instructions of teachers in South Africa and Nigeria. Participants were drawn from 40 high schools, 80 Economics teachers and 6 Economics teaching Heads of Department from both South African and Nigerian schools. Quantitative was adopted to measure large population (Babbie, 2010) while interviews were conducted to strengthen the data, based on the view that further explanatory insights can be generated (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delpont. (2011). This was done to establish methodological and data triangulation, and significantly to strengthen the study's validity, reliability and trustworthiness and credibility for the findings. Purposive random sampling was used to generate participants. However, the results generated from the study were particularly time and setting bound and can therefore not generalize; they are subject to suggestions for further interpretation and transferable to other similar case studies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005).

*Influence of Teachers' Professional Development on Classroom Practices in South Africa and Nigeria*

Data were collected using triangulation method of questionnaire and two types of interviews: the personal interview of HoDs and focus group. This mixed method approach was based on the nature of information that needed to be real experiences and opinions that denote facts, corroborating data through the use of more than one instruments. 80 teachers were personally given questionnaire, part 1 of the instrument demanded for their biographical information while part 2, a 1 to 4 point scale was used; 1: Strongly agree, 2; Agree, 3: Strongly disagree and 4: disagree. Respondents were to respond on their views on the in-service professional development (IPD), additional space was also provided for their comments.

Six Heads of Department teaching Economics were personally interviewed; ten teachers were later interviewed in focus group interviews, to corroborate the data. These interviews provided this study with useful insights on the teachers' perspectives of in service professional development. All interviews were tape- recorded and transcribed. Responses from the questionnaire were computed into frequencies and percentages for analysis of data. Responses from the interviews were themed and analyzed in relations to research questions for the study. Comparison of responses was done to establish or validate the trustworthiness of the evidence.



## 6. Results

THEME	SA		A		SD		D	
	SA	NGR	SA	NGR	SA	NGR	SA	NGR
In service trainings are regular and there is continuity.	21	08	16	12	02	16	01	04
Contents of IPD are appropriate to my subject.	24	18	10	15	05	06	01	01
I easily implement skills and knowledge of IPD in classroom teaching.	22	14	11	12	07	14	0	0
I get support from Stakeholders to attend IPD or get IPD materials	15	05	12	05	10	24	03	06
There are limitations to IPD efficiency in schools.	21	21	14	09	03	08	02	02

### Findings from the qualitative:

Based on the interviews, the following key dimensions seem to be major findings on the influence of IPD on classroom instructions of the teachers.

***Contents of the various IPD.*** Teachers who have attended various IPD activities agreed that the motives of the activities were to improve teachers' performance, but sometimes may not be focused on what could benefit their classroom teaching. They claimed that the workshops may be to introduce new policy or to share academic performance of learners in a particular examination. This they described as time wasting and wasting of their resources.

*You see when they call us for workshops at times, we get there to discover that they are not what can benefit our classroom instructions; sometimes it may be to tell us how each school has perform in an examination. What we need id what can improve us as teachers in the classrooms and not that.*

**Supports to attend workshops/trainings.** Teachers lament their inability to get support from either the schools or education offices to attend workshops/activities that can promote their teaching most times. It's only few who get support to do this.

*Attendance in any of the workshops are not funded most times, sometimes, you may be lucky to get assistance from the schools, if you find yourself in a school that is buoyant while at times, it may be possible based on your closeness to the principals; if you are in the good book. You get subsidized or funded to attend.*

**Classroom implementation of the knowledge.** It is agreed that they always implement what they have acquired as knowledge in these workshops if it is subject based for them, but hardly implement if their subject is not the focus of IPD activities. They agreed that it will enhance their learners' performance if they improve their classroom instructions.

*Adopting knowledge or skills into our classrooms is not a problem, as long as what we learn is practical and can fit in into our situation. Most times if the IPD is subject based, the teachers will be able to use their school contexts as basis of the experience in such workshops; teachers can also call for activities that will suit their classroom situations. There is need for classroom focused IPD activities for us.*

**Regularity of the IPD.** Teachers complained of irregularity of various workshops or activities to develop them. They clamour for continuity in the professional development programmes to promote their teaching.

*I believe in continuity of any good initiative. As much as every teacher requires continuous improvement in his classroom responsibilities, we believe we can be improved if we have continuous access to IPD activities; we meet to share knowledge and other stuff that can help our classroom performance. So, the budget should be increased to accommodate regular IPD. At least one IPD per term, as against the present practice of 2 or 3 a year (SA)*

*What I know is that for me or other teachers as well, IPD is not regular at all, and sometimes it is once a year or once in three years. Teachers are not structured on a regular plan to attend IPD activities. We desperately need to keep abreast of happenings in our subjects, that is why there is need for us to rub minds on issues and challenges in our classroom teaching of our subject. Funds should be adequately provided to accommodate this. (NGR)*

## **7. Challenges of In-Service Professional Development**

Effectiveness of teachers remains the priority of any in-service professional activity. However, so many issues militate against the purpose of professional development of teachers in Nigeria. Yinusa (2008) concludes that teacher professional development activities have failed the purpose in real practice of teaching. These challenges were identified:

Inability of the in-service professional development to meet the expectations of the participating teachers. Teachers who have participated in various in-service professional development activities lamented that most of these activities did not benefit their teaching skills in classrooms. Teachers rated these trainings as mere wasting of their precious time as their key expectations and needs were never met or attended to. Inappropriate professional activities to suit instructional tasks delivery in classroom was

also identified as shortfall of professional development by teachers. Various subjects demand varied teaching skills and approaches that promote effective teaching and learning of various subject-contents: these varieties, teachers decried were not considered as teachers of different specialization were hurled together for same professional development activities that did not consider or embed their individual subjects.

Limitation of participants in IPD activities: Another prominent challenge of professional development of teachers was the limited number of teachers that could access in-service professional development trainings in Nigeria. Many teachers were denied participation in various workshops due to the allocated costs for IPD. Most were not opportuned to participate, and those who participated were not frequently trained. Access to most government sponsored or organized in service professional development programmes for teachers are never open to all teachers, due to cost of organizing these programmes, officials from the ministry of education tend to limit no of teachers that can attend such programmes as so many things are involved. This promotes favourism most times to select those lucky ones that can be part of the trainings. This system excludes and makes many teachers not to participate for several years in the profession.

Okwunaso and Igwebuike (2006) submit the inability of the participating teachers in professional development activities to apply or adapt the knowledge experienced or acquired in the training to classroom as a big challenge to usefulness of in-service professional development. Innovation of new approaches or ideas in teaching do not manifest in classroom teaching after teachers' participation in these elaborated trainings. Relevancies of the contents of the attended workshops and other in service programmes attended by teachers have been highlighted to be a great challenge. Teachers' claim that the contents of such are not applicable or cannot be adopted or adapted for their peculiar classroom experience cases.

## **8. Recommendations and Conclusion**

Education is the wheel of development. Teachers are the major stakeholders that determine or effect the quality of education; it is only the quality education that can promote necessary developments across the country. Teachers who will facilitate learning should be efficient in instructional tasks delivery of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. Professional development activities are designed or aimed at effectiveness and efficiency of teachers in schools (Ajani, 2018). Due to these, varied in-service professional development programmes/activities are to be structured and designed to implement National policy of Education in Nigeria. Professional development could also be well designed to introduce teachers to new curricula, new ideas, and new approaches to teaching. Their knowledge and skills can also be updated on their subject matters through collaborations of ideas, mentorship opportunities among teachers and skills acquisition and changed attitudes to arsenal all facilities in educational system.

To ensure effectiveness of in-service professional development activities among Nigerian teachers, there is need for organizers of various in-service professional developments of teachers to design contents of professional development activities according to subject areas of the participating teachers for the programmes. This boils down to consultations with teachers to know their teaching challenges and their urgent expectations.

This study recommends that every teacher should be allowed to access various in-service professional development activities regularly every year to update them. Numbers of participating teachers should be increased at every professional development programme to accommodate many teachers at every session of the professional development.

Pre-assessment and post-assessment of professional development programmes should be carried out for every activity of professional

development. This will ensure application of knowledge and efficacy of the programme in classroom situations.

Attendance and participation of teachers in in-service professional development programmes should be motivated based on improvement in quality of academic performance of learners in subjects.

## **9. References**

- Adesina, S. (2004). *Growth with Development. Nigeria's Educational Experience between 1914 – 2004*. Abeokuta. Educational Industries Ltd.
- Ajani O.A. (2018) Needs for In-service Professional Development of Teachers to Improve Students' Academic Performance in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Arts Social Sci J* 9: 330. Doi: 10.4172/2151-6200.1000330
- Amadi E.C (2008). *Administration and Personnel Development in Adult and Community Education*. A Module: Port Harcourt: Harey Publications Port Harcourt.
- Babbie, E. (2004). *The practice of social research*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Bantwini, B.D. (2009). District professional development models as a way to introduce Primary School Teachers to Natural Science Curriculum Reforms in one district in South Africa. *Journal of Education for Teaching*. 35, 2, 162-189.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche', C.B. & Delpont, C. S. L. (2011). *Research at Grass Roots*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Fareo, D.O. (2013) Professional Development of Teachers in Africa: A Case Study of Nigeria. *The African Symposium: An Online Journal of the African Educational Research Network*, 13, 63-68.
- Garet, M.S., Porter, A.C, Desimone, L. Birman, B. F. & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What Makes Professional Development Effective? Results from a National Sample of Teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*. 38, 4,915-945.

- Jita, L.C. & Mokhele, M.L. (2014). When teacher clusters work: Selected experiences of South African teachers with the cluster approach to professional Development. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2): 1- 15.
- Leedy, P.D & Ormord, J.E (2005). *Practical Research: planning and design*. New Jersey: Pearson Education.
- Louise, S. (2008). *Teacher Effectiveness*. Studymode.com
- Mkhwanazi, S. (2014). Crossing the past political boundary: Teacher Professional Learning in South African Reform Context, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, (5)10. Page 425 – 432.
- Okwuanaso, S.I and Igwebuike, S.A (2006). Education and Development: Perspective on Teachers; Attitude to Work. *African Journal of Research in Education*. 1(1): 21-25.
- Ravhuhali, F. (2014). Teachers' Perceptions on the Impact of Professional Development on Promoting Quality Teaching and Learning. PhD Thesis, Unpublished. Thohoyandou: University of Venda.
- Steyn, G.M. (2008). Continuing Professional Development for Teachers in South Africa and Social Learning Systems: Conflicting Conceptual Frameworks of Learning. *Koers*. 73, 1, 15-31.