Global Challenges in Teacher Professional Development

Olufemi Adebayo Abiona & Ihezie Donatus Ukpabi

Department of Educational Management, University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Department of Adult Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

CORRESPONDING EMAIL ADDRESS:
olufemi.abiona@yahoo.com

ORCID NUMBER:

ABSTRACT

Issues relating to Teacher Professional Development (TPD) have generated several opinions and counter-opinions among stakeholders globally. TPD involves programmes designed for teachers to acquire the required skills and competencies necessary for attaining quality education. TPD activities also encourage teachers to develop professionally in preparation for improved performance. Challenges confronting TPD includes unfavorable government policies, lack of funds for TPD, inadequacy of educational infrastructures – unfriendly classrooms, lack of teaching aids, laboratories and libraries. The study aimed at analyzing the challenges confronting teachers and proffering solutions that would enhance apt professionalism. The descriptive survey research design was used. Interviews were conducted with selected important personalities. Findings indicated that teachers need varieties of professional development skills along with the knowledge of their subject matter and experience in order to be effective teachers. Conclusion was made that TPD is essential for teachers in order to bring change to the education sector and provide students with the best education. The study recommended that TPD should be intensified in order to make educators competent, in the delivery of instruction and information to learners. In-service teacher training should move from courses with little impact to modern forms of pedagogue that integrate mentoring by highly skilled teachers.

HOW TO CITE

Introduction

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) is often defined as, "structured professional learning that results in the changes of teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes" (Darling-Hammon, Hyler & Gardner 2017). Teacher professional development encompasses a range of goals and topics related to curriculum, co-curricular needs, and teamwork requirements aimed at enhancing teachers' careers. This is typically achieved through nationwide courses designed to continually elevate the standards of learning. There has been a notable increase in the utilization of technology by teachers for both educational and personal purposes in recent years (Anekwe & Anekwe, 2023).

Teachers are frequently tasked with implementing policies that have been formulated by others, often without due recognition of their expertise and the limitations these places on their professional development (Smith 2017). Neglecting the input of teachers in shaping policies can lead to disengagement and hinder their participation in professional learning (Du Plessis 2019). The emphasis on tangible outcomes and enforcement mechanisms can cultivate an atmosphere of distrust, which erodes and undermines teachers' authenticity, dedication, and professional discretion (Hardy 2018, Appel 2020). The performative approach to teacher learning emphasizes professional development that aligns with a particular vision of teacher professionalism and meets the criteria for professional registration. This approach focuses on quantifiable measures, such as the number of hours, to meet specified standards. However, it may not effectively support genuine learning that arises from addressing contextualized issues and real-world teaching practices. This kind of learning may not necessarily lead to deep understanding or meaningful changes in teaching practice (Mockler 2020).

The concept of professional learning has been interpreted in various ways. Teacher education is a prominent and frequently examined subject globally. It is an evolving, multifaceted, and diverse domain shaped by divergent perspectives on the objectives of research and the aims of education. Despite so much research and increased funding, most education systems around the world have not yet found effective ways to prepare students for a rapidly changing world and its increasing demands for higher unpredictable skills. (Gomendio, 2017). Hence, it is obvious that equipping prospective teachers with the necessary professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes before starting the profession plays a vital role in professional growth. Thus, to train more competent prospective teachers and to strengthen support for teachers, pre-service training offered by education institutions needs to meet high standards and in-service teacher training needs to move from courses with little impact to new forms that integrate mentoring by highly skilled teachers (Gomendio, 2017).

In one of his studies, Suriansyah (2015) stated that one of the efforts to improve the quality of education is through teachers because teachers are the main key for improving the quality of learning outcomes, which in turn will improve the quality of education as a whole. Suryana and Ismi (2019) explained that the impact a school or a curriculum on learners is dependent on the quality of the teachers. Therefore teachers are required to have certain skills. For this reason, the ability of teachers must always be developed so that the quality of learning can be maintained and improved (Zuhaeriah, Ali, & Yusra, 2020). This is also supported by the opinion of Notanubun (2017) when he stated that the development of teacher performance programmes is a crucial part that needs attention in developing the quality of education services.

Teaching beliefs are defined as teachers' views and comprehensions about teachers' teaching knowledge. The teachers' teaching beliefs influence the understanding of instructional theory and teaching experiences, and the teaching plan ever controls the teaching behaviors. Schutz et al. (2020) agreed that teacher's teaching beliefs determine and influence their classroom practices, as well as influence the teachers' professional development. Therefore, teachers should become more self-aware of their beliefs and realize that their actions and their interactions form part of every individual learner's construction of knowledge.

Contemporary Approaches to Teacher Professional Development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes have been in high demand during the last decade, and the design and dissemination of new TPD models have been the impetus for discussion among educators around the world. Borko, H and Koellner, K. (2010) further commented that the previously called teacher in-service training, is now preferably labeled by scholars and practitioners as teacher professional development.

The teachers who completed teacher professional development can implement more effectively than those who didn't complete the teacher professional development, such as teacher training, teacher induction program, and mentoring program (Soe, 2018). Yue (2019) stated that teacher professional development integrates 21st-century skills into teaching. For instance, it integrates cross-cultural understanding skills into literature class, and practices critical thinking and problem-solving skills in management class. Yue (2019) opined that effective teacher professional development methods can address teacher learning and practice. These methods include: need assessment of Teacher Professional Development, peer-mentoring, building collaboration, creating positive school culture, developing 21st-century skills, instructional strategies for active learning, embedding core values, continual professional development, research-based projects, and integrated ICT teaching.

What is Teacher Professional Development?

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) can be regarded as the activities and programmes (formal or informal) exposed to teachers to learn about and develop the required skills and competencies necessary for the attainment of quality education (Awodiji, 2018). The TPD activities also encourage teachers to grow professionally to prepare themselves for advancement in the classroom and beyond. It is a model for developing teachers' personal and institutional skills, knowledge and abilities, including training, career development, coaching, and mentoring (Awodiji, 2018). Professional development is essential for teachers so that they can bring change in the education sector and provide students with the best education. The attendance and participation of teachers in various professional development activities will improve their residual knowledge and empower them with varied teaching skills (Ajani, 2020).

TPD activities include Training for Higher Qualification (THQ), continuous education, mentorship, coaching systems, seminars, workshops, conferences, and staff exchange programmes. Guskey (2000) opined that professional development for teachers is a way to change the professional practices, beliefs and understanding of school teachers towards an articulated end; with the end being students learning. Professional development for teachers can be self-directed or organized by the school through conferences, seminars, and workshops among others which are designed to enhance their knowledge, skills and expertise in their

teaching practice. The significance of quality TPD cannot be overstated. Effective training equips educators with the requisite skills and knowledge to excel in their roles, by enhancing their job satisfaction. Conversely, inadequate professional development can lead to frustration, diminishing enthusiasm and performance among teachers (Gremuth, 2016).

21st Century Professional Development Skills
Professional teachers are expected to imbibe certain skills that are necessary for impactful dissemination of instruction. It is not enough to inculcate such professional skills. Teachers should be able to demonstrate the professional skills expected of them. Cox J. (2019) identified the following 21st Century Professional Development Skills:

1. **Adaptability:** In this modern, digital age, teachers need to be flexible and able to adapt to whatever is thrown their way. Whether it's to the way students learn, the behavior their classroom exhibits, or their lesson plans, being able to adapt is a skill that every modern teacher must have.

2. **Confidence:** Every teacher needs to have confidence, not only in themselves but in their students and their colleagues as well. A confident person inspires others to be confident, and a teacher's confidence can help influence others to be a better person.

3. **Communication:** Being able to communicate with not only your students but with parents and staff is an essential skill. Think about it: almost all of a teacher's day is spent communicating with students and colleagues, so it is crucial to be able to talk clearly and concisely in order to get your point across.

4. **Team Player:** Part of being a teacher is being able to work together as part of a team or a group. When you work together as a team, it provides students with a better chance to learn.

5. **Continuous Learner:** The world is always changing, along with the curriculum and educational technology, so it's up to you, the teacher, to keep up with it. A teacher who is always willing to go that extra mile to learn will always be an effective, successful teacher.

6. **Imaginative:** The most effective tool a teacher can use is their imagination. Teachers need to be creative and think of unique ways to keep their students engaged in learning, especially now that many states have implemented the common core learning standards into their curriculum.

7. **Leadership:** An effective teacher is a mentor and knows how to guide their students in the right direction. They lead by example and are a good role model. They encourage students and lead them to a place of success.

8. **Organization:** Modern teachers have the ability to organize and prepare for the unknown. Studies show that organized teachers foster more effective learning environments. So, it is even more imperative to be organized if you want higher-achieving students.

9. **Innovative:** A modern teacher is willing to try new things, from new educational apps to teaching skills and electronic devices. Being innovative means not only trying new things, but questioning your students, making real-world connections, and cultivating a creative mindset.

10. **Commitment:** While being committed to your job is a traditional teaching skill, it is also a modern

one. A modern teacher needs to always be engaged in their profession. The students need to see that their teacher is present and dedicated to being there for them.

11. Ability to Manage Online Reputation
In this digital age, most, if not all, teachers are online, which means they have an "online reputation." Modern teachers need to know how to manage their online reputation and which social networks are okay for them to use.

12. Ability to Engage: It is essential to find materials and resources for students that will keep them interested. This means keeping up-to-date on new learning technologies and apps, and browsing the web and connecting to fellow teachers.

13. Understanding of Technology: Technology is growing at a rapid pace. While these developments may be hard to keep up with, it is something that all modern teachers need to do. It's a process that may take time but will be greatly influential in the success of your students.

14. Know When to Unplug: Modern teachers know when it's time to unplug from social media and just relax. They also understand that the teacher burnout rate is high, so it's even more critical for them to take the time to slow down and care for themselves.

15. Ability to Empower: Teachers inspire; that's just one of the qualities that come along with the title. Modern educators have the ability to empower students to be critical thinkers, innovative, creative, adaptable, passionate, and flexible. They empower them to solve problems, self-direct, self-reflect, and lead. They give them the tools to succeed, not only in school but in life. When school administrators are seeking to hire teachers, they look for few basic

requirements, such as a college degree, experience working with children, and, of course, patience. According to Cox (2019), teachers need a variety of professional development skills along with knowledge of their subject matter and experience in order to be an effective teacher. Likewise, as rapid developments in technology integrate into our day-to-day lives, they affect the way students learn and teachers teach. Modern teachers need to be competent in not only basic skills but new skill sets, as contained in Fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1: Teacher Resources Professional Development
Source: https://www.teachhub.com/professional-development/2019/11/15-professional-development-skills-for-modern-teachers/.

Purposes of teacher professional development
The need for teacher professional development cannot be over-emphasized. The following are the purposes why TPD should be intensified:
1. Reflecting on Teaching Practices: Professional development allows teachers to critically examine their teaching methods, identify areas for improvement, and enhance their instructional strategies.

2. Skills Building: Teachers can acquire new skills, such as technology integration, classroom management, or assessment techniques, through targeted professional

development programs.

3. Staying Current: Continuous learning helps educators stay informed about the latest research, educational trends, and best practices in their field.

4. Meeting Continuing Education Requirements: Many teaching certifications and licenses require ongoing professional development to maintain qualifications.

5. Expanding Knowledge Base: Teachers can deepen their understanding of subject matter, pedagogy, and student learning by participating in workshops, conferences, and courses.

6. Improving Instruction: Professional development provides tools and strategies to enhance classroom instruction, leading to better student outcomes.

7. Advancing Career Opportunities: Engaging in professional development can open doors to leadership roles, specialized positions, or promotions within the education system.

8. Networking: Teachers can connect with colleagues, share ideas, and collaborate with other educators during professional development events.

9. Accessing Resources: Workshops and conferences often provide valuable resources, lesson plans, and teaching materials that teachers can use in their classrooms.

10. Boosting Student Success: Ultimately, effective professional development positively impacts student achievement by equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills needed

to support diverse learners.

Factors Affecting Teacher Professional Development

Teachers' professional development faces several challenges that impact their effectiveness. Some of the challenges are discussed below:

1. Low Wages: Teachers in Nigeria are not adequately compensated for their hard work. They earn meager salaries that are not commensurate with their qualifications and experience. This has resulted in a lack of motivation among teachers, leading to poor performance (Nicholas 2023).

2. Lack of Professional Development: Insufficient opportunities for ongoing training and skill enhancement hinder teachers' growth and effectiveness.

3. Government Commitment: The Nigerian government's commitment to education plays a crucial role. There has been a lack of consistent commitment to improving teacher development, efforts such as policy provision exist but implementation remains a challenge.

4. Funding and Infrastructure: poor funding leads to inadequate educational infrastructure, including classrooms, teaching aids and libraries. Without proper resources, it is challenging to enhance teachers' development.

5. Public Perception: The teaching profession often suffers from a poor public image, affecting teacher motivation and satisfaction.

Benefits of Quality Professional Development Programmes for Teachers

Professional development describes programs that enable educators to improve their own teaching — both by learning new teaching styles, tips and techniques, as well as subject areas; and by interacting with expert instructors and experienced educators in the programmes of their choice.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). The scholars identified some of the benefits of quality professional development programmes for teachers, as highlighted below:

- Enables teachers to hone specific skills and learn new ones.
- Provides new strategies for educators.
- Can enhance student learning.
- Encourages the success of new teachers.
- Is an opportunity for teachers to go in-depth on specific topics.
- Promotes a professional growth mindset.
- Can be used to meet salary advancement requirements.
- Creates better planning and organizational skills.
- Keeps educators engaged, motivated and positive.

10 Strategies for Effective Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development programmes have to be implemented with expertise strategically. Several strategies aimed at ensuring that teacher professional development efforts are effective are highlighted below:

1. **Focus on honing classroom teaching skills:** The most important purpose of teacher professional development is to enhance student learning. Hence, teacher professional development courses are created specifically to help working teachers improve their practice and classroom teaching techniques.

2. **Use it to develop subject matter expertise:** Helping teachers gain advanced expertise in key academic areas, especially in their personal and professional interests, can enhance student achievement as well as teacher engagement and satisfaction.

3. **Provide strategies for overcoming specific challenges in the classroom:** Teacher

development programs on such important topics as bullying prevention and classroom management provide valuable insight and perspective into aspects of the educational experience that can help set the stage for optimal learning.

4. **Encourage added value through networking and collaboration:** Meaningful interactions with expert instructors and experienced fellow educators are another valuable aspect of the professional development experience. In online teacher professional development courses, for example, peers often come from other parts of the country and can bring new and unique perspectives to familiar topics.

5. **Consider different formats:** While in-depth professional development courses and one-off workshops are two of the most common formats for teacher professional development, there is a range of other models as well.

6. **Use of technology:** The transformative impact of technology in education is important, but occasionally overlooked. Though some teachers are resistant to technology, others may discover that it can enhance their ability to help students thrive in the digital age.

7. **Keep it simple and specific:** Picking one or two things to focus on, rather than seven or eight, is more productive. Specific in-depth training is more likely to yield actionable classroom results than programming that is too broad in scope.

8. **Make it ongoing:** For school districts, professional development training is most effective when paired with ongoing support and evaluation from administrators,

including opportunities to review and learn from what worked and what did not.

9. **Create opportunities for feedback and discussion:** Teachers can get feedback independently, on their teaching impact, by cultivating connections with fellow teachers in their areas and by using online professional development courses to develop new connections with educators from other locales.

10. **Actually put new training to work in the classroom:** Much like a guidebook that gets written and then put on the shelf, teacher professional development is only effective when educators put what they've learned to use in their teaching.

Conclusion

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes have been in high demand. Teachers who completed their TPD perform effectively more than those who didn't complete the teacher professional development, such as teacher training, teacher induction, and mentoring programmes. TPD integrates 21st-century skills into teaching. Equipping prospective teachers with the necessary professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes before starting the profession plays a vital role in professional growth. Professional development is essential for teachers so that they can bring change in the education sector and provide students with the best education. The significance of quality TPD cannot be overstated. Effective training equips educators with the requisite skills and knowledge to excel in their roles, by enhancing their job satisfaction. Conversely, inadequate professional development can lead to frustration, diminishing enthusiasm and performance among teachers

Recommendations

i. Teacher professional development programmes should be intensified in order to make educators competent in the delivery of instruction and information to learners.

ii. Pre-service training offered by education institutions needs to meet high standards of modern technologies for impactful teaching of students.

iii. The attendance and participation of teachers in various professional development activities should be encouraged as this would improve their residual knowledge and empower them with varied teaching skills.

iv. Professional development for teachers should be self-directed or organized by the school through conferences, seminars, and workshops.

v. Teacher professional development programmes should be designed to enhance educators' knowledge, skills and expertise in their teaching practice.

vi. In-service teacher training should move from courses with little impact to modern forms of pedagogue that integrate mentoring by highly skilled teachers.

References

Ajani, O.A (2020). Investigating the Quality and Nature of Teachers' Professional Development in South Africa and Nigeria in

Aliu, J.F, (2023). *When Teachers Speak: Senior School Teachers' Perception of Professional Development Programmes in Ilorin, Nigeria.* Vol 10, No 4

Anekwe, J. U., & Anekwe, I. M. (2023). Digital Citizenship Education For 21 St Century Field of Work: Challenges for Digital Immigrants in Public Secondary Schools in Anambra State Nigeria. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education,* 15(1)

Appel, M., 2020. Performativity and the demise of the teaching profession: the need for rebalancing in

Australia. *Asia-Pacific journal of teacher education*, <u>48</u> (<u>3</u>), 301–315. doi:10.1080/1359866X.2019.1644611

Awodiji, O.A (2018). Staff Development Policies, Practices and Lecturers' Job Performance in Nigeria and Pakistani Universities in

Aliu, J.F, (2023). *When Teachers' Speak: Senior School Teachers' Perception of Professional Development Programmes in Ilorin, Nigeria*. Vol 10, No 4.

Borko, H and Koellner, K. (2010). Contemporary Approaches to Teacher Professional Development. *International Encyclopedia of Education (Third Edition)*.

Cox J. 2019. Teacher Professional Development. *M.S. in Education*. https://www.teachhub.com/professional-development/2019/11/15-professional--skills-for-modern-teachers/

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://doi.org/10.54300/122.311.https://learning policyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report

Du Plessis, A.E. 2019. *Professional support beyond initial Teacher education: pedagogical discernment and the influence of out-of-field teaching practices*. 1st ed. Springer Singapore Pte. Limited. doi:10.1007/978-981-13-9722-6.

Gremuth (2016) in Enyiazu, F.A (2023). Current Issues on Professional Development Needs of Principals and Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Gomendio, M. (2017). "Preparing for a changing world: the OECD PISA global competence framework." *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 162, OECD Publishing, Paris.

Guskey, T.R (2000). Evaluating Professional Development in Abdulrazak, A. (2020). *Exploring the Impact of Professional Development on Teaching and Learning from the Perspective of Teachers in Ghana*

Hardy, I., 2018. Governing teacher learning: understanding teachers' compliance with and critique of standardization. *Journal of education policy*, <u>33</u> (<u>1</u>), 1–22. doi:10.1080/02680939.2017.1325517

Mockler, N., 2020. Teacher professional learning under audit: reconfiguring practice in an age of standards. *Professional development in education*, <u>48</u> (<u>1</u>), 1–15. doi:10.1080/19415257.2020.1720779

Notanubun, Z. (2017). Development of the competence and professionalism of teachers. HDPGSDI Regional IV National Seminar Procedure (pp. 1-7). *Pedagogical journal*.

Schutz, P., Hong, J., & Cross Francis, D. (2020). Teachers' Goals, Beliefs, Emotions, and Identity Development. New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429456008

Smith. 2017. *Teachers as self-directed learners active positioning through professional learning*. 1st ed. Springer Singapore. doi:10.1007/978-981-10-3587-6

Soe, H.Y., (2018). "The Impact of Teachers' Professional Development on the Teachers' Instructional Practices: An Analysis of TALIS 2013 Teacher Questionnaire, Finland". *World Voices Nexus*. The WCCES Chronicle, Vol. 2 No. 3: Available at https://www.worldcces.org/article-7-by-soe/the-impact-of-teachers-professional-development-on-the-teachers-instructional-practices-an-analysis-of-talis-2013-teacher-questionnaire-finland. (25. 01. 2021)

Suriansyah. (2015). The Role of Teachers in Improving the Quality of Education. *Journal of Education Quality,* 7(2), 123-135.

Suryana, Y and Ismi, F. M (2019). "Curriculum Management in Improving the Quality of Graduates,"J. Isema Islam. Educ. Manag., Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 257–266, 2019, doi:10.15575/isema.v4i2.6026.

Yue, X. (2019). Exploring effective methods of teacher professional development in university for 21st century education. *International Journal of Innovation Education and Research*, 7(5), 248-257.

Zuhaeriah, Z., Ali, M., & Yusra, Y. (2020). The role of Islamic education teacher's competency in improving the quality of education. *International Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education,* 2(1), 108-130. Doi: https://doi.org/10.24239/ijcied.Vol2.Iss1.15