

Professional Self - Development Opportunities Available to Teachers' in Public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

The study examined professional self-development opportunities available to teachers' in public Secondary Schools in Ebonyi state. A sample size of 612 teachers representing 20% of the public Secondary School teachers in the zones were selected through stratified random sampling technique. Two research questions and two hypotheses were posed. The design of the study was descriptive survey. Data were collected with questionnaire. Mean and z- test used for data analysis. Findings of the study revealed that some teacher's professional self-development opportunities like workshops on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, conference attendance and professional seminars on education are not readily available to teachers' in the state among others. It was recommended that regular professional self-development opportunities should be regularly organized for public Secondary School teachers in the state.

Keywords: Professional, Self-development, Opportunities, Teachers, Secondary Schools

Introduction

The role of school teachers in actualizing the aim and objectives of the educational system in the country cannot be over emphasized. Teachers are the ones trained with the appropriate level of competence that is capable of turning out into the society students who have acquired literacy,

numeracy, manipulative, and communicative skills. In recognition of the importance of the teacher, Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN, 2013) spelt out in the National Policy on Education the goals of teacher education. From the goals of the teacher education, it can be seen that teachers are the bed rock of any

educational system and that is why there has been continuous clamoring for effective and efficient teachers in the educational system. This is buttressed by the fact that no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers (Thompson, 2015). Consequently bringing the teacher into a prominent role, there is need to improve his/her efficiency. These enormous responsibilities leave the teacher with the challenge of striving to meet the high expectations of the various stakeholders in education. Teachers are asked to teach in increasingly multicultural classrooms; to place greater emphasis on integrating students with special learning needs in their classrooms. Education systems therefore seek to provide teachers with opportunities for professional self-development in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high-quality teacher workforce. It therefore becomes imperative that continuing professional development programmes should be provided to the teachers.

Teachers professional development is a process in which the teacher is equipped to move effectively in teaching (Garuba in Nwichi 2011). The programmes are meant to update the knowledge of the teachers and enhance their professional status and competence. Through teachers professional development programmes, innovations in methodology, curriculum contents, improvisation of resource materials, administrative,

supervisory and evaluation are made known to teachers to improve their competence and effectiveness. According to OECD (2009) Professional development are activities that develop an individual's skills, knowledge, expertise and other characteristics as a teacher. Villegas-Reimers (2013) defined it as the development of a person in his or her professional role. More specifically, he opined that teacher development is the professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically.

Teachers' professional self-development opportunities available for teachers include: in-service training, seminars, conferences, and team teaching (Olaniyan & Luccas, (2008). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) listed informal dialogue to improve teaching, courses and workshops, reading of professional literature, Education conferences and seminars, professional development network, individual and collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation and observation visit to other schools and qualification programmes as some of the professional self-development opportunities available for teachers.. Therefore, training is relevant to teachers' professional development. Staff professional development programmes are therefore aimed at professional and personal

development of the teachers in the school system.

When it comes to professional development, teachers have often relied on several of the following elements: Attending conferences and seminars, Subscribing to journals, joining professional organizations, reading education books, connecting with mentors and colleagues, Hearing guest speakers, and Taking courses. Each of the above traditional methods is still extremely worthwhile. But at the same time, they come with certain limitations. They cost money, are limited to certain times and places, deal with content that may or may not pertain, and connect teachers to a restricted number of resources

Olaniyanin and Nwichi (2011) presented the various types of continuing professional development programmes as, on the job training/coaching, Induction/ orientation, Apprenticeship, Demonstration, Vestibule and Formal Training. Despite the various teachers professional self-development programmes, so many teachers in Ebonyi State have not been participating in professional development programmes since their graduation and appointment as teachers, while it took others a long time to do so. Nwabueze (2010) observed that some teachers that entered into the teaching profession with Nigerian Certificate in Education retired with the same qualification. He further observed that workshops and seminars organized

for teachers in the state in recent times, recorded poor attendance of teachers.

Teachers' should see professional self-development as relevant to their professional self-development in terms of improving their professional competences, improving their subject mastery and updating their knowledge. More so as public secondary school students' record poor results in West African Senior School Certification Examination (WASSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO), school administrators and teachers are expected to embrace professional self-development programmes to enhance their performance and at the same time achieve educational goals and reduce financial wastage incurred in registration of WASSCE and NECO (Garuba, 2008).

Whereas it appears obvious that teachers need Professional Development and substantial research seem to have confirmed this; not much importance seem to be attached to professional development of teachers in Nigeria. For most teachers, training ends as soon as they graduate and no opportunities exist for updating their knowledge and skills and ultimately their classroom practice. In-service training, workshops and seminar are very few and irregularly organized (Nwabueze, 2010). There is even the poor understanding of the importance of continuous retraining of teachers on the part of Federal, State and Local Government Areas. Indeed funds are rarely allocated and where available,

funds are inadequate and often misused.

Teachers' professional self-development opportunity has become one of the most common central concerns in educational studies over the past several decades. As a result, ongoing research conducted in many countries has shown that professional development activities within and beyond the school day affect teachers positively (Carver & Katz, 2004; Easton, 2008; ; McCaughtry, Martin, Kulinna, & Cothran, 2006; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006; 2001). Hirsh (2001) has consistently found that the professional development of teachers is the best way to affect their quality of teaching.

In other words, planned development programmes provide a means of maintaining acceptable level of employee and organization performance. Specifically, orientation contributes to organizational effectiveness by facilitating the socialization process so that new employees become integrated into the organization as soon as possible. The sooner the employees feel comfortable in the organization, the sooner they can be productive. Other forms of training and development provide employees with the knowledge and skill they need to remain qualified for their jobs in the face of changes and new challenges. Such challenges include keeping abreast of current developments in one's field as related to new responsibilities, performance

standards, equipment, or work methods. The effectiveness of staff development programmes in schools entails consideration of improvements in students learning in line with modern educational improvement efforts.

This is the reason behind the formation of the opinion by experts and stakeholders in education that provision of quality education cannot be achieved without competent and qualified teaching personnel. According to Quattlebaun (2012), Teacher development in recent times has moved beyond simple in-service workshops and has expanded into a more robust system of continuing education. In order to advance in their careers, therefore, teachers should seek out professional development opportunities which are ongoing and aligned with standards and assessments. In Ebonyi state many secondary school teachers have been teaching with the same qualification for many years without improving themselves professionally. Bayar (2014) observed that many teachers lack proper preparation for their assigned teaching positions. Most educational capacity building programmes in the state recorded poor attendance. Most of the teachers are not current with the teaching methods therefore require retraining programmes too to enable them effectively perform their duties and to keep abreast with the modern technological innovations and trends in the teaching profession. These

problems need to be addressed if the teachers must be the most resourceful persons for the promotion of quality education in the state. This work aims at establishing the types of professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi state.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of the study was to investigate the professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State. Specifically the study:

1. identified the types of professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State.
2. determined the reasons why public secondary school teachers undertake professional self-development opportunities in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions

1. What types of professional self-development opportunities are available to public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the reasons why public secondary school teachers undertake professional self-development opportunities in Ebonyi State?

Methodology

Area of the study: The area of study was Ebonyi state, Nigeria

Design of the Study: A descriptive survey design was adopted for the study.

The design was found appropriate because it involved a description of already existing phenomena.

Population for the study: The population comprises of 3062 teachers currently serving in the 203 public secondary schools of Ebonyi State. The State has three education zones of Abakaliki, Afikpo and Onueke.

Sample for the study: By a simple random sampling technique, a sample size of 612 teachers which is 20% of the total population was selected.

Instrument for data collection: A self-designed questionnaire tagged "Professional Self-Development Opportunities Available to Teachers in Public Secondary Schools Questionnaire (PSOATPSSQ)" was used to elicit information from the respondents on the effect of professional development of public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State as perceived by urban and rural teachers.

Reliability of instrument: The researcher used a test retest method to determine the reliability of the questionnaire. 20 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 20 teachers not used for the study in an interval of two weeks. Thereafter, the responses were collated and Pearson product correlation moment used to calculate the reliability co-efficient which stood at 0.86.

Method of Data collection: The instrument was administered on the

teachers with the help of 5 research assistants. A total of 592 respondents correctly filled and returned the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis: Data collected were analyzed using the mean score and z-test. Mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted while mean score below 2.50 was rejected.

The hypotheses were tested using z-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

Professional Development Programmes available to public Secondary School teachers in Ebonyi State

Table 1: Mean ratings of the types of professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers' in Ebonyi state.

S/N	Professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers	Urban X	Rural X	XX	Decision
1	Sandwich education programmes (B.ED)	3.17	3.58	3.38	A
2	Study leave opportunities	2.45	2.86	2.66	A
3	Workshops on use of ICT in teaching	1.70	1.25	1.48	N/A
4	Conference attendance	1.80	1.93	1.87	N/A
5	Professional seminars on education	1.64	1.65	1.65	N/A
6	Reading of professional literature	1.12	1.30	1.21	NA
7	Mentoring	1.63	1.64	1.64	N/A
8	Coaching	1.42	1.62	1.52	N/A
9	Apprenticeship	1.365	1.81	1.73	N/A
10	Demonstration	2.13	1.32	1.73	N/A
11	Induction	1.64	1.21	1.43	N/A
12	Orientation	2.31	2.00	2.16	N/A
13	Post qualification courses	1.21	1.40	1.31	N/A

A = Available, NA = Not Available

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the types of professional self-development opportunities available to public secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State. Urban and rural teachers agreed on items 1 and 2 with the aggregate mean scores 3.38 and 2.66 greater than

the criterion mean of 2.5. They disagreed to items 3 to 13 which have their mean scores lower than the criterion mean of 2.5. Therefore, professional self-development opportunities like workshops on use of ICT in teaching, conference

attendance, Reading of professional literature, Mentoring, Coaching, Apprenticeship, Demonstration, Orientation, Post qualification courses and professional seminars on education are not readily available to secondary school teachers in Ebonyi State.
Reasons why public secondary school teachers' undertake professional self-development opportunities in Ebonyi state.

Table 2: Mean Rating of Urban and Rural Teachers on the Reasons why Public Secondary School Teachers' Undertake Professional Self-Development Opportunities in Ebonyi state.

S/ N	Reasons for Professional Self-Development Opportunities	X_u	SD_u	X_R	SD_R	XX	Decision
1	In-service training produces highly motivated and efficient classroom teachers.	3.20	1.55	3.16	1.52	3.18	Agreed
2	It exposes the teacher to new technologies and methods of teaching	3.22	1.55	3.12	1.52	3.17	Agreed
3	It helps the teachers to cultivate the right attitude to work	3.09	1.56	3.62	1.49	3.35	Agreed
4	It enhances quality teaching performance	3.02	1.56	2.58	1.55	2.80	Agreed
5	It helps to improve on the qualification of the teachers.	2.98	1.57	2.86	1.53	2.92	Agreed
6	It helps teachers to learn how to operate new learning resources like ICT gadgets.	3.20	1.55	2.88	1.53	3.04	Agreed
7	Regular participation of teacher in workshops and seminars expose the teachers to changes and innovations in school management.	3.18	1.55	3.19	1.52	3.19	Agreed
8	Improvement of teachers practices results in the students' performance	3.17	1.55	3.02	1.53	3.10	Agreed
9	Teachers' professional self-development programmes contribute to teachers' development and improvement.	3.13	1.56	2.98	1.52	3.06	Agreed

X_u = Mean for urban Teachers; SD = Standard Deviation for urban teachers; X_R = mean for rural teachers; SD_R = standard deviation for rural teachers; XX = cumulative mean.

Table 2 shows the mean scores of urban and rural teachers on the reasons why public secondary school teachers undertake professional self-development opportunities in Ebonyi state. The aggregate mean of 3.13 for the urban teachers and 3.04 for rural teachers are greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. Therefore, it can be deduced that the effect of professional development programmes include: highly motivated and efficient classroom teachers, exposing teachers to new technologies and methods of teaching, cultivation of right attitude to work, enhances quality teaching performance, improves on the qualification of the teachers and also helps teachers to learn how to operate new learning ICT resource-like gadgets, exposes the teachers to changes and innovations in school management and contributes to teachers' development and improvement.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study revealed that some teacher's professional self-development opportunities like workshops on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching, conference attendance and professional seminars on education are not readily available for teachers in Ebonyi State. The study revealed sandwich education programmes (B.ED) and study leave opportunities only as the professional self-development programme available to teachers in the state. Teachers should

explore other self-development programmes available for teachers. This statement is supported by OECD, (2010) that listed informal dialogue to improve teaching, courses and workshops, reading of professional literature, Education conferences and seminars, professional development network, individual and collaborative research, mentoring and peer observation and observation visit to other schools and qualification programmes as some other professional self-development opportunities available for teachers. Olaniyan and Lucas (2008) also listed in service training, seminars, conferences, workshops, extension programmes and study leave as types of professional self-development opportunities available for teachers' development. Sandwich education which is professional self-development opportunity available for those who are engaged with full time teaching job most of the year and who can only go for such training during the long vacation should only be the self-development programme together with study leave to be explored by teachers in other to improve on their teaching skills.

Non-attendance to self-development programmes in the state will mean using the teaching skills they learned in the pre-service courses they attended and also be lacking information about new policies and modern methodologies of teaching. This statement is in agreement with the finding of Nwaebueze (2010) when

he observed that some teachers that entered into the teaching profession with Nigerian Certificate in Education retired with the same qualification. Teacher development in recent times has moved beyond simple in-service workshops and has expanded into a more robust system of continuing education (Quattlebaun, 2012). In order to advance in their careers, therefore, teachers should seek out professional development opportunities which are ongoing and aligned with standards and assessments. New skills and methods of teaching are emerging every day.

The study also revealed the reasons why public secondary school teachers undertake professional self-development opportunities available to teachers. They know that it is meant to enhance their services and performance. Through the programmes the teachers' are exposed to new teaching methods, cultivate right attitude to work, improve on their qualification, and learn how to operate new learning resources like ICT gadgets. Both the urban and rural teachers agreed on these points. These are in line with the findings of Mohammed (2006) and Jegede (2004). Both agreed that the reasons why teachers undertake professional self-development opportunities include the need for the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and new roles, enhance the quality teaching performance and improvement on the qualification of the teachers. It is obvious that the journey from being a

novice teacher to becoming an expert teacher will be facilitated quickened by a well-planned professional self-development opportunities. Therefore, in view of the overwhelming importance of professional self-development opportunities available to teachers in the state, it is recommended that a regular professional self-development opportunity be organized and also made compulsory for every serving teacher to attend if the nation's educational goals must be attained which the teacher is at the hem of affair.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is obvious that there are limited professional self-development opportunities available for teachers' in Ebonyi State public secondary schools. These are Sandwich education programmes (B.ED) and Study leave opportunities. The rationale for teachers' professional self-development opportunities is to update and upgrade the teachers' knowledge and skills with particular reference to their areas of specialization and teaching skills, improve the quality of teachers which will be reflected in the quality of our education. Therefore to achieve the education goals of our nation as stated in the national policy on education, teachers who hold the key to sound education must from time to time be exposed to professional development programmes for better performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. Government should create enabling environment to enable teachers utilize the opportunities offered by these self-development programmes.
2. Teachers' should regular participate in professional self-development opportunities to continually update their knowledge and acquire new skills.
3. Participation in professional self-development opportunities should be part of the criteria for promotion of teachers in the state.
4. Teachers should not just be increased but be regularly paid since most of the teachers development programmes are on self-sponsorship.

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