A Comparative Study of Teachers’ Continuing Professional Development
In Nigeria and England

A Case Study of Primary Schools in Abuja and Portsmouth


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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Nigeria and England. The researcher identifies and examines the practice and policies underpinning teacher CPD, focusing on primary schools in Abuja, Nigeria and Portsmouth, England. The paper argues that teachers need to be constantly involved in a range of CPD activities in order to be acquainted with any new innovations and developments in the practice. The choice of comparators reflects the fact that the Nigerian educational system and its teacher education were based on the historical colonial relationship between England and Nigeria, as English being the language used in both educational systems. The aim of the study is to explore the scope for policy and knowledge transfer, good practice and networking in teacher professional development between the two countries. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the schools. Data collection will be through questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires will be distributed to teachers of the selected schools to inquire about their CPD experience, and expectations and the Head teachers will be interviewed using semi structured questions. Pilot studies were conducted prior to the data collection and the outcome shall be discussed in the paper.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria has received high priority especially with the Education for All (EFA) target to ensure that every Nigerian child receives primary education by the year 2015. The Federal Government of Nigeria is therefore committed to the provision of qualitative and quantitative education by way of opening access of the EFA goals to reduce and eradicate illiteracy by the set time (Tahir, 2005). One of the areas which require urgent attention in order to achieve this goal is the quality of teachers in schools. Day (1999), claims that teachers are the schools greatest asset and will only be able to fulfil their educational purposes if they are both, well prepared for the profession and able to maintain and improve their contributions to it through career long learning.
According to the national policy on education, in Nigeria, *teaching as a profession is perceived as a form of public service which requires expertise, knowledge, and specialised skills which are usually maintained through vigorous and continuous training* (TRCN 2008).

In England and Wales there has been increasing attention toward raising the standards of teachers’ professional development. According to the green paper (DfEE 1998); the Government is committed to giving teachers the training and support they need to do their jobs well and to progress in their careers. Hence the need for continuing professional development opportunities is fast becoming mandatory for teachers to progress in their careers. The specific aims of the research are:

- To identify and examine the practice and policies underpinning teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD), focusing on primary schools in Abuja, Nigeria and Portsmouth, England.
- To identify and compare the key issues and gaps in the Continuing Professional Development of teachers at primary school level in both countries.
- To explore the scope for policy and knowledge transfer, good practice and networking in the teaching profession between the two countries.

The research shall be addressing the following questions:

- What is the practice of teacher CPD in private and public primary schools in Abuja, Nigeria and Portsmouth England?
- What are the policies underpinning teacher CPD in both countries?
- What are the limitations and issues in teacher CPD in both countries?
- What are the transferable good practices in CPD that can be explored in either countries and how can these be adopted?
Background and Research Context

Professional development and training are experiencing sweeping changes in many countries. Professional standards are being established as a result of educational reforms, and self regulatory professional bodies are being set up to improve teacher professionalism (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996, Villegas-Reimers 2003, Moon 2007). With the advancement in technology, globalisation and the dynamic nature of our society, teaching has gradually grown into a profession which requires a level of training and development of core skills to remain effective and relevant in the society of today. Professionalism cannot be attained without adequate training and continuous professional development.

According to Hoyle (1995), a professional is expected to have acquired a set of skills through competency-based training which will enable efficiency in service delivery. Effective CPD leadership supports teacher development, equipping the school workforce with the skills to effectively support pupils and help them reach their full potential. In England and Wales, the Government’s focus on raising standards of teaching and learning through the CPD strategy aims to adopt a partnership approach in its implementation with LEAs, schools, teachers and other relevant organisations or stakeholders (Brown, Edmonds and Lee 2001, DfEE, 1998, Calderhead and Shorrock, 1997). According to the green paper (DfEE 1998), the Government has demonstrated its commitment to giving teachers training and support for their professional development so that they can do their jobs well and progress in their careers. Today, most schools in Britain have adopted development plans, many of which relate to individual and national teacher development needs in a very broad sense. The central government has also played an increasing role in setting the agenda through training grants, and the national inspection body i.e. Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED).

Evidence from research in Nigeria indicates that after teachers have been trained there is no adequate programs put in place for their professional development to further equip them for the realities of the schools and the profession (UNESCO 2007).

In agreement to this, Asiedu and Krofi (1985), argue that the absence of courses on self evaluation and professional development and the absence of the required
condition for support of the new teacher make most teachers vegetate a few years after leaving college.

This is because many of them are unable to build on the knowledge they get from college due to a lack of CPD programs to keep them updated about recent development in teacher education. Capacity building to improve and update the quality of the existing teaching force is a great necessity in Nigeria today and the Government and International Development Partners are making every effort to ensure that the educational objectives are met (Nwaboku 2003, Tahir 2005, Isyaku 2006). The United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has embarked upon a 10 year project, Teacher Training in Sub Sahara Africa (TTISSA) which aims at increasing the quantity and improving the quality of the teaching force in 17 African countries of which Nigeria is one (UNESCO 2005).

Raising the standard of education has been part of the government’s agenda in past decade and the importance of adequate and quality training and development in teacher education in both countries cannot be overemphasized.

As a result of this, the TRCN Teacher has recently introduced the Mandatory Professional Development Programme (MCPD) which is aimed at providing teachers with the necessary tools to ensure that they are up to date with information that will match the test of time (TRCN 2008). The objectives of the programme is to:

- Provide a forum for cross-fertilization of experiences and ideas,
- To maintain competence and relevance in today’s dynamic society,
- Maintain professional excellence,
- Keep teacher abreast with the latest innovation in the teaching profession,
- Sharpen the skills knowledge and continued relevance of teachers in the educational or school system,
- Maintain professional excellence, and enhance their commitment to the profession. (TRCN 2008)

Given that one of the specific aims of the research is to explore the scope of knowledge transfer of good practice between both countries, understanding the concept of knowledge transfer will form a contextual background which underpins the research. Knowledge transfer among organisational units provides opportunity for mutual learning and cooperation. One of the reasons why researchers carry out
research is to produce knowledge that can be used for further development and make an impact in the wider society. Dolowitz and Marsh (1996) suggest several areas that knowledge transfer could take place which include; policy goals, policy statement, structure and content, administrative techniques, institutions, ideas, attitudes and concepts and negative lessons. Knowledge transfer is a two way process i.e. being open to learning from others as well as sharing your ideas and experience. One of the most effective forms of knowledge transfer is achieved through human interaction and conversation. (www.esrcsociety.ac.uk). The use of interviews and questionnaires as form of data collection will enable the researcher gain access to relevant information by making enquiries through questioning, interaction and conversation.

**Description of Gaps in Research**

Having examined various literatures it evident there is adequate research on teacher training and CPD in both countries even though there is far more in England compared to Nigeria. However, research into various ways of providing qualitative CPD for teachers and issues related to the provision of relevant CPD programmes in Nigeria and England is ongoing as there are continuous developments and reforms in teaching practice.

From the review of the literature so far there has not been any case study in Abuja on this subject despite its strategic position and influence as the nation’s capital. Exploring and identifying the issues in teacher training and CPD in private and public primary schools within Abuja has not yet been researched. Hence this will fill the gap and make a contribution to knowledge in the education sector. Even though the Nigerian government has adopted various strategies to ensure that the quality of teachers’ is improved as this is one of the EFA (Education For All) goals, research shows that the problem of quality amongst teachers is still a major issue in schools all over the country (Ozuruoke 2006, Omoreghe 2003, Iji 2006). Although research into improving the standard of the teaching force in Nigeria has been ongoing for the past decade, CPD activities are being explored (Kolo 2006, Solomon 2006, Garuba 2005).

In England, there has been an increase in awareness of CPD programs in schools in the past decade (Gray 2005, Brown, Edmonds and Lee 2001). There has also been
significant progress in raising the profile of CPD but research is still required to access whether there are consistent opportunities to access CPD and to determine the effectiveness of such programs. Using Portsmouth as a case study in this study will be a new area to be explored, as it will give an in depth study of teacher and CPD in the schools. From a review of previous related research in this area, there is no comparative study on teacher training and CPD programs in primary schools. Even though there have been studies on teachers training and CPD programs, in other parts of both countries, this research shall focus on Portsmouth and Abuja thereby exploring opportunities of networking and collaboration. The study will help to establish the relationship between the practices of CPD programs in both private and public schools in both countries thereby creating opportunities for transfer of good practice, collaboration and possible networking in teacher professional development in the two countries and hopefully will contribute to raising the standards of teaching through CPD programs at a national level.

**Importance of Research**

Abuja is a fast growing and developing capital city which has experienced a constant rise in population over the past decade. There has been a corresponding increase in the number of schools, and the teaching force. Educational reforms adopted by the national government are very prominent in Abuja being the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria. There is no doubt that exploring ways of enhancing professional development to raise the standard of teaching in schools in Abuja, will make an impact and serve as a model to other parts of the country. Given the rapid level of technological advancement in contemporary society, it is expected that this will impact on the training and professional development programs for teachers, as they must be updated on pedagogic, technological and policy development to enhance their competencies, attitudes, knowledge and skills. The study will explore the practice and the forms of CPD programs adopted in Portsmouth’s independent and state maintained primary schools and identify the issues and gaps in the provision hence make some useful recommendations. The
research will therefore be useful to teacher development organisations and schools in both Nigeria and England.

Methodology

A mixed method research methodology will be used for this research as it will require an innovative combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection through questionnaires and interviews combined with a study of statistical records, primary and secondary documents. Mixed method research is often referred to as multi strategy research which employs the use of more than one type of research method (Bryman, 2008). This form of research provides more comprehensive answers to research questions and is the rationale behind the choice of this method.

Participants in this study will be Head teachers and teachers in primary schools based in Abuja, Nigeria and Portsmouth, England. As stated by Neuman (2006), looking at something from multiple points of view improves accuracy. Hence, one could argue that mixed methods research will definitely improve the quality of the research.

The researcher has chosen to use interviews because, they are flexible and adaptable ways of finding out about things and are widely used as a research instrument in qualitative research (Arksey and Knight 1999). May (1997), claims that interviews yield rich insights into people’s experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings and are therefore very suitable for this study.

The researcher will be using semi-structured interviews and predetermined questions will be sent to each participant in advance, but the order can be modified based upon the perception of what seems most appropriate to the interviewer (Robson 2002).

Head teachers will be interviewed while the questionnaires will be distributed to teachers in the selected schools. The interviews will be conducted and questionnaires distributed to teachers between September 2009 and January 2010 when schools are in session. However the questionnaires were piloted in Nigeria and Portsmouth between April and June 2009 while schools were in session.

Having gone through the OFSTED reports and school league tables in Portsmouth, a purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of schools that will be participating in the research. Also, the ratio of state: independent schools, was put into consideration during the selection process as there is a difference in the distribution
and number of primary schools in both countries. Hence in Portsmouth a total of ten state schools and two independent schools shall be used for the study whereas in Abuja, two state schools and ten private schools will be used. The researcher shall be making use of SPSS to analyse the questionnaires while the interview will be analysed based on specific themes.

**Pilot Study**

Pilot tests of the questionnaires were conducted prior to implementation as part of the research ethics as suggested by Brown (2001), Murray and Lawrence (2000), and Cohen and Manion (1994).

“A pilot study allows the researcher to determine the adequacy of instructions to interviewers, or to respondents completing a self-completion questionnaire” (Bryman 2008:248).

This is important as it will help to reveal any lapses in the structure and content of the questions and also the time allocation. Considering the cultural differences between the two countries, pilot tests were conducted both in Abuja, in April 2009 and Portsmouth in June 2009. The questionnaires were distributed to about seventeen teachers in two private primary schools in Abuja, Nigeria, to observe their response to the questions and further improve on the structure and content of the questionnaire. Brief informal interviews were conducted with the head teachers from two private and one public school in Abuja. This enabled the researcher have an understanding of the current structure of the schools and some relevant background information to improve the questionnaire.

Letters of introduction were sent to eleven primary schools comprising of two public and nine private in Abuja city. The selection of schools was based on a snowballing non probability sampling technique based on recommendation. Due to time constraint, the researcher was only able to obtain positive feedback from four private schools and one public school. The other schools will be followed up via email or phone calls to know if they are willing to participate in the research. Document and reports relevant to the area of research, were also obtained from the TRCN(Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria) , ERC(Education Resource Centre), FCT UEBE (Universal Basic Education Board ) UNESCO and DFID( Department for International Development)
in Abuja, and also a brief interview with an executive in the TRCN which enlightened the researcher on current development in teacher education.

The revised questionnaire was also piloted in Portsmouth in June 2009, among thirteen teachers from two different state primary schools in Portsmouth. Based on the response to the questionnaires, further changes were made as regards the structure, content and the number of questions.

Confidentiality and Ethics

In order to maintain confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability in the research the researcher will try as much as possible to use anonymous names or alphabets for the participants and schools. The participant’s privacy and confidentiality will be given due consideration, and he or she shall be assured of confidentiality and privacy in any information provided Bassey (1999). Therefore, care will be taken by the researcher to treat every one of the participants with dignity and respect and protect the confidentiality of data provided. As a social researcher the principle of voluntary consent will be adhered to and participants will be given the opportunity to participate willingly without any form of pressure from the researcher (Bryman, 2008). The researcher will be conscious to avoid any form of deception in order to cajole the participant to agree to participate in the research.

Intended Outcome

The researcher intends to make some recommendations for promoting relevant and effective professional development programs across primary schools based on findings of the research. It is also intended to draw attention to good practice.

The study will help to reveal any lapses or limitations in the CPD practice and the professional development programs in each country, explore possibilities of networking, knowledge transfer of policy or good practice to improve current practice, and contribute to raising the standard of teaching in Nigeria.
The researcher also hopes to make suitable recommendations towards strategies for addressing the issues relating to teacher professional development in both countries. The outcome of this research will be a useful contribution to education in both public and private sectors, and will be of relevance to Teachers, School Managers, Teacher Training Organisations, International Development Partners, and the Department of Education in both countries.

References


Atkins (1988)

Glossary

CPD  Continuing Professional Development
EFA  Education for All
ERC  Education Resource Centre
FCT  Federal Capital Territory
DFID Department for International Development
DfEE Department for Education and Employment
LEA  Local Education Authority
MCPD Mandatory Professional Development Programme
OFSTED Office for Standards in Education
TRCN Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria
TTISSA Teacher Training in Sub Sahara Africa
UBEB Universal Basic Education Board

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