

Issues in In-Service Education Provision for Teachers in Nigeria: The Way Forward in this Decade and Beyond

Alabi, Festus Oluwole. Ph. D.

Department of Educational Management
Faculty of Education
Adekunle Ajasin University
Akungba- Akoko
festusalabi@outlook.com

Ige Akindele M, Ph. D.

Deputy Director
Ministry of Education
Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria
deledivine@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: *In Nigeria, in-service education provides opportunity for teachers to improve themselves professionally, particularly in acquisition of additional knowledge, skills and teaching pedagogy. Many in-service programmes thus exist for teachers for this purpose. The patronage of in-service programmes by teachers however has negative implications, particularly on the provision of quality education for pupils/students in schools. In this paper, the issue of in-service education of teachers in Nigeria is examined with the rationale for it and the implications on quality education provision for pupils/students discussed. To achieve the objective of this paper, relevant information and data were gathered from existing literature with a view to buttress the issues raised therein. To ensure the effectiveness of in-service education however, recruitment of qualified teachers, provision of quality education by teacher-training institutions, regular inspection of schools, approval of in-service education prior to commencement by teachers, prompt upgrading of teachers after in-service education, and motivation of teachers, are recommended.*

Keywords: *Issue, In-Service, Education, In-service Education, Provision, Teacher, Way forward, Decade*

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional perception of teachers is that they possess the reservoir of knowledge from which they provide for learners. Another school of thought sees teachers as those who direct the activities of learners while giving them the freedom and choice of action. According to Education Act of 1964, cited in Nwodo & Ifeanyieze (2009), a teacher is someone occupying a teaching position in the general educational system, which requires the holder to instruct students or is the position of principal or head teacher or deputy principal (deputy head teacher) in a state or registered private school or educational institute. Findings of researches (Ibukun, 1983, cited in Ibukun, 2009) and reports (Achimugu, 2005, Lassa, 1998; Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004; Ojo, 2006) have however buttressed the invaluable role of teachers in the educational system of any nation. They are at the last post to translate government's policies and intentions into practical form and the key factor that determine the quality and success of any curriculum (Ivowi, 1998). It is upon their number, their quality, devotion and commitment to duty that depend the success and progress of any educational system.

Qualified, competent, and dedicated teachers are the most vital tool for sustainable human and material development. In spite of the crucial role of teachers in the educational system, the quality and effectiveness of teachers remain very low and has continued to attract criticisms in Nigeria (Nwachukwu 1995, cited in Ochu, 2006). It is worthy of note that poor stock of teachers, inadequate training of teachers in tertiary institutions, limited period for teachers, and non-comportment of teachers are issues of concern in schools in Nigeria these days.

2. IN-SERVICE EDUCATION, APPROACHES AND CLIENTS IN NIGERIA

In-service education is an organized learning experience, which is provided for a teacher after his/her appointment and designed to develop the understanding of work operations standards, institution, philosophy, policies, procedures, as well as current research result (Mohammed, Gajus, Osca and Solomon, 2002). It is an avenue for teachers to remain on the job while at the same time seeking for additional knowledge and skills which can enable them improve in

teaching. It thus provides opportunity for teachers to learn new procedures, approaches, and techniques in the use of teaching materials.

In Nigeria, there are many approaches to in-service education of teachers. A teacher after being granted study leave can enroll for NCE, degree or post-graduates certificate in any tertiary institutions on full time basis. At the end of the training, such teacher has to resume at his/her duty post. There is also the sandwich programme, being run in the Faculty of Education and Institutes of Education of Universities during holidays. Part-time programmes also serve as avenue for teachers to acquire in-service education. Presently, National Teachers' Institute (NTI) runs NCE, degree and Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes during weekends i.e. Friday and Saturday of each week, for teacher to improve their knowledge and skills in the field of education, particularly in teaching. In addition, the 'distance learning approach' to in-service education, creates opportunity for teachers to study independently and make themselves available for examination at the designated centre and period by the Coordinators. The open universities in Nigeria also creates opportunity for teachers to study online, through interactions with Computer, assisted by various computer/ICT Software after which examination will be written at the main centre.

Three categories of teachers are the clients of in-service education in Nigeria including: those untrained (i.e. without the basic teaching qualification (i.e. NCE). They are also those with degrees outside the field of education (i.e. B. Sc, M. Sc, B.A, M.A, and B. Tech) or other lower qualifications such as Ordinary (OND) and Higher (HND) Diploma who need to acquire the basic teaching qualification to remain on the job. Some teachers are also trained (i.e. possess teaching qualification) but without the basic teaching qualification. Such teachers possess certificates such as Grade III, II, and I and other lower qualifications. There are those trained and possess the basic teaching qualification but still require additional knowledge and skills in their area/discipline, to improve their competency in teaching and improve their status. Such teachers are those with certificates such as N.C.E; B.ED, BA.Ed, and B.Sc. Ed.

3. RATIONALE FOR IN-SERVICE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN NIGERIA

Many issues justify the patronage of in-service education by teachers in Nigeria, such as:

3.1. Preponderance of Unqualified Teachers in the Educational System

Even though the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) stipulates that Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is the basic qualification for teaching, many teachers in Nigeria still possess Grade III II, Ordinary Diploma (OND) and other lower qualifications (Federal Ministry of Education, 2007; 2009) thus implying that they are unfit for the teaching job. Continued harbouring of such teachers in the educational system will thus spell doom for qualitative teaching of pupils/students in schools. It is worthy of note that to improve the quality of teaching in Nigeria, Teachers Registration Council (TRCN) has warned that any unqualified teacher who fails to upgrade his/her qualification within the next few years would be sent packing from the job. It is thus imperative that such teachers should upgrade their qualifications to the basic teaching standard so as not to be shown the way out of the job

3.2. Improvement of the Curriculum

It can be noticed that are lots of improvements in the curriculum of education in Nigeria. Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), in charge of curriculum improvement, has over the years been making efforts to improve education curriculum. Of recent, a new curriculum was launched by Federal Government, to replace the old curriculum, sequel to the inauguration of Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme since 1999. According to Balogun (2009), the 9-year basic education curriculum is structured into lower level basic education (for primaries 1-3), middle level basic education (for primaries 4 to 6) and upper basic education (for Junior Secondary Schools) curriculum. New subjects such as Computer Studies and French have also been inculcated to replace the obsolete ones while the core subjects have been redefined. According to him, the curriculum now takes into account the targets of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS), value orientation, poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation such as Cultural and creative Arts. Basic Science & Technology also replaces the Primary Science at the Primary level while at the Junior

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Secondary level, Basic Science has been separated from Basic Technology and now being taught as separate subjects. The introduction of such curriculum thus makes it imperative for teachers to upgrade their knowledge and skills, to be able to cope with its demand.

3.3. Unsatisfied Admission Demand into Tertiary Institutions

An observation of the situation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly with regards to the admission of candidates, would reveal that there is high-level unsatisfied admission demand into tertiary institutions. Annually, many candidates wish to have their ways into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Unfortunately, statistics as indicated in Table 1 confirm that they have not been having the ways.

Table1. Applications and Admissions into Universities in Nigeria: 1999-2009

Year	No. of Applications to Univs.	No Admitted	No. Un-admitted
1999/2000	417,773	78,550	339,223
2000/2001	467,490	50,277	417,213
2001/2002	550,399	60,718	544,321
2002/2003	994,380	51,845	942,535
2003/2004	1,046,950	105,157	941,793
2004/2005	841,878	122,492	719,386
2005/2006	916,371	NA	NA
2006/2007	803,472	123,626	679,846
2007/2008	1,054,053	194,521	859,532
2008/2009	1,182,381	NA	NA

Source: <http://www.ume.com.ng>, cited in Ajadi, T.O. (2010). *Private universities in Nigeria: The Challenges ahead. American Journal of Scientific Research*, 7 (15-24).

It is indicated in Table 1 that in 1999/2000, applications to universities were 417, 773 out of which 78, 550 candidates were admitted. The trend in unsatisfied admission demand continued till 2007/2008. In 2007/2008, 1,054,053 candidates applied for admission but 194, 521 were admitted. Universities' administrators are arguing that available infrastructure and facilities in their institutions are limited and cannot cope with all the applicants annually. As a result, many candidates are becoming frustrated and discouraged. What can be noticed is that many teachers that join teaching service who wish to further their education are unable to do so in regular tertiary institutions due to inadequate spaces. To this group of teachers, in-service training such as part time and sandwich programmes, can serve as alternatives.

3.4. Issue of Unemployment

Unemployment has been a nightmare in Nigeria. Many graduates of educational institutions, particularly at the tertiary level now find it difficult to get job after their training (Oyebola, 2009; Ibeh, 2009) which is corroborated by Data in Table 2.

Table2. Percentage Unemployment Rates in Nigeria: 2002-2011

Survey Period	Percentage
2002	12.6
2003	14.8
2004	13.4
2005	11.9
2006	13.7
2007	14.6
2008	11.8
2009	19.7
2010	21.1
2011	23.9

Source (1): National Bureau of Statistics: labour force survey in Federal Republic of Nigeria. *Annual Abstract of statistics*

(2): www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/unemployment-rate

Due to the fear of losing their jobs if they resign completely for full time training, many teachers prefer in-service training where their jobs can be sustained while at the same time studying. It is also a fact that significant percentage of teachers in Nigeria, are females who are occupied by different activities such as cooking, washing of clothes, children's care at the home setting. Many teachers in this category thus find it difficult to abdicate their roles for full time education in regular institution to avoid the implications on their marital life and family stability.

3.5. Poor Performance of Students

In Nigeria, poor performance of students in examinations has been a major concern of the education stakeholders. A major reason, being adduced for this ugly trend is ineffectiveness of teachers (Ajaja & Kpandgbong, 2000; Cirfat & Zumyil, 2007) due to their inadequate skills and knowledge. Many teachers thus require in-service training to improve their knowledge, skills and teaching ability so that there can be improved academic performance of pupils/students.

3.6. Degrading Quality of Teaching

It needs not be overemphasized that the quality of teaching in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has continued to attract condemnations owing to observed lapses (Okebukola, 2002; Saint, Hartnett & Strassner, 2003, Dabaleen, Oni & Adekola, 2000; Moja, 2000). It is however not a gainsaying that these days, tertiary institutions in Nigeria are characterised by cultism, student unrest, laikaidassical attitude of lecturers, brain drain, just to mention few. Such crises often lead to incessant closure of institutions, unstable and reduction in academic calendar and ultimately, inadequate training of students. Many products of the educational system are unfortunately in schools as teachers today. If such teachers thus refuse to update their knowledge and skills, the negative effect will be transferred to the pupils/students, which may affect the products of schools now and future. In-service education can thus serves as avenue for such teachers to improve their knowledge and skills.

3.7. Education Gap

Educational gap, particularly between the Southern and Northern parts has been a contending issue in Nigeria. Attempt to bridge the wide gap, has led Federal Government to introduce 'quota admission policy' in educational institutions, particularly at the higher level. The implementation of such policy has resulted to the recruitment of low quality candidates into tertiary institutions, and ultimately, the reduction of the quality of tertiary institutions' graduates. Many teachers in schools today are products of such 'quota admission policy' thus making it imperative for them to strive to update their knowledge and skills.

4. ISSUES IN IN-SERVICE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS

While it cannot be contested that in-service education provides opportunity for teachers to upgrade their qualifications, knowledge and skills, its continued patronage by teachers in Nigeria, poses serious threat to the provision of quality education for the children, going by the following issues:

4.1. Exodus of Teachers from Service

Over the years, inadequate teachers, has been an issue of concern in Nigeria's educational system (Achimugu, 2005; FRN, 2004; Adetakun, 2009, Okebukola, 2000) which is buttressed by data in Table 3

Table3. Teachers at Primary and Post-Primary Levels of Educational System in Nigeria: 2004-2008

	Number				
	2004	2005	2006	2007**	2008*
Primary					
Total Teachers	591,474	599,172	586,749	468,202	586,930
Teacher/Pupil Ratio	36	37	39	46	36

Post-Primary

Total Teachers	154,594	144,413	199,163	207,283	270,650
Teacher/Student Ratio	40	44	32	29	24

Sources: *Federal Ministry of Education/Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)*

Note: * = Provisional ** = Revised

It is indicated in Table 3 that throughout the period, teacher-pupil ratios exceeded the 1:25 at primary level. In the case of secondary, except in 2007 and 2008 whose results were provisional, higher ratios were recorded which is an indication that there were inadequate teachers in schools during the period. In spite of the dearth of teachers in schools, situation where teachers leave for in-service education has been creating vacuum in schools. Many teachers that enroll in sandwich and full time programmes are difficult to be replaced, particularly those that teach the core subjects such as English Language, Mathematics, and Sciences (i.e. Biology, Chemistry, Physics) due to dearth of teachers in the educational system. When teachers thus leave for in-service education, pupils/students are left untaught during the period of absence of such teachers. For those that are lucky to be replaced, there is usually no continuity in learning by pupils/students as it usually takes much time for the pupils/students to adjust to the style and method of new teachers. Unfortunately, many teachers that even chose to go for these programmes do return to meet their pupils/students the same way they left them. The implication of continuity of such situation is that many schools would continue to suffer as a result of dearth of teachers while the pupils/students would also be at the receiving end. Quality education may therefore be a 'mirage' in schools which may not augur well for the country at this period when the standard of education is adjudged to be falling (Ige, 2011; Adeyemi & Ige, 2002).

4.2. Delay in Integration of Certificates

It is worthy of note that teachers enroll in in-service programmes with the hope that at the end of the training, the certificates would be used to upgrade their status and with increment in their salaries and allowances. In Nigeria, a teacher has to obtain approval from the Ministry of Education and Teaching Service Commission prior to the commencement of the programme. What can be noticed is that many teachers who had completed in-service training could not be upgraded by their employers while for those that are lucky to be upgraded, it takes longer time for this to be actualized which has been demoralizing teachers and discouraging many from enrolling for such programmes and making many to be uncommitted to teaching in schools.

4.3. Inappropriate/Inadequate Training in Teacher-Training Institutions

The quality of education that is provided for teachers on in-service training in Nigeria leaves much to be desired. One of the avenues for in-service training is sandwich programme, in Faculty of Education and Institutes of Education of Universities. Unfortunately, sandwich programmes in Nigeria are characterized by inadequate infrastructural facilities, unstable calendar, high-level examination malpractices, poor commitment and negative attitudes of lecturers, overcrowded examinations' time table as well as limited time for training (Oku, 1999; Ige, 2010; Ogonoh, 2002; Eweniyi, 2002; Bello, 2006) thus calling into question the kind of certificates they award to clients. Like the computer acronym 'Garbage In, Garbage Out (GIGO), many teachers who chose to enroll in these programmes, complete them without appreciable improvement in their knowledge and skills. It is thus disturbing that these kind of teachers would come back to teach in schools. One can then imagine if the pupils/students would profit from such education acquired.

4.4. Exodus from Teaching

It has been the habit of many teachers not to return to teaching after the completion of in-service training in Nigeria, having acquired additional qualification which can improve their chances in the labour market. Securing job in Nigeria in the present dispensation does not depend on the area of one's specialization but on connection i.e. 'god fatherism' (Ibeh, 2009). It is thus not surprising that many teachers with teaching qualifications abound in organizations such as banks, oil and multi-national companies today. Many teachers on in-service training thus believe in leaving teaching for lucrative jobs at the end of such training. As a result, the rate of attrition in teaching has been high in Nigeria which is not helped by its poor status compared to other professions (Achimugu, 2005). The implication of continued attrition of teachers is that schools will continue to experience shortage of teachers which will not guarantee the provision of quality education for pupils/students now and in future.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inadequacy and low quality teachers are disturbing features of Nigeria's educational system. In-service education has however been an avenue for teachers to upgrade their skills, knowledge and professional competency. The patronage of in-service education by teachers in Nigeria is having negative implication on the provision of quality education for pupils/students in schools. This paper examined the issues in in-service education of teachers in Nigeria. It is hopeful that if the under-listed measures are adopted, the continued patronage of in-service education will have negative effect on the quality of education in Nigeria.

5.1. Recruitment of Qualified Teachers

Government should recruit additional graduate teachers with minimum teaching qualification, to strengthen the stock of qualified teachers in schools and reduce the number of those that will seek for in-service education in future.

5.2. Approval of In-service Education Prior to Commencement by Teachers

Teachers that will proceed on in-service education should get approval prior to the commencement of the programme so that at the end, government will not have any cause to reject the certificate.

5.3. Need for Commitment of Teachers on In-Service Education to Schools

In this case, they should endeavour to assist in the teaching of their subjects during weekends and when they are free in campuses.

5.4. Provision of Quality Education by Teacher-Training Institutions

Institutions that provide in-service education should ensure that quality education is provided for the teachers. In this regard, the lecturers should be alive to their responsibilities.

5.5. Acceptance of Certificates of In-service Education and Prompt Upgrading of Status of Teachers

Government should encourage teachers who had completed in-service education by accepting their certificates and upgrade their status without delay which has been the practice in many States in Nigeria. Teachers on in-service programmes should however desist from abandoning their duty posts after their training. They should ensure that they return to their job after the training.

5.6. Regular Inspection of Schools

Inspectors from the Ministry of Education and other Parastatals should monitor the situation in schools, to ascertain teachers on in-service education, and submit regular report to Government. Schools' administrators should monitor teachers on in-service training and present periodic report on their activities to Government so that it can be kept abreast of the situation in schools. They should also ensure that there is no vacuum in the teaching of subjects of those teachers on in-service education. In this regard, they should ensure that alternative arrangement is made to fill the vacuum prior to the completion of the training.

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