English Language Teachers' Awareness of Professional Development Activities in Senior Secondary Schools in Ondo City, Nigeria

Mopelola Susan Olakunde
Department of General Studies, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo

Abstract

An investigation into English language teachers' awareness of professional development in Ondo City, Nigeria was the focus of this study. The study adopted the descriptive design. One null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance, while one research question was answered. Ten (10) Senior Secondary schools were randomly selected. Ten teachers teaching SS2 English(one per school) were purposively selected. Teacher disposition to professional development questionnaire (r = .84) was used in data collection. Data were analysed using frequency counts, percentage and means, and t-test Findings revealed that teachers' level of awareness of professional development was high(70.0%). Again,there was no significant gender difference in English awareness of professional development activities($t_{(8)}$ t= 2.24; p>.05).Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended, among others, that English language teachers' should acquaint themselves with various professional development outlets for improved professional competence.

Keywords: English language, teachers**,** Professional Development, Awareness

Introduction

Professional development is necessary for continuous update of teachers' knowledge and skills necessary for better classroom practices. It is also the medium through which teachers learn. For English language teachers, it is not just relevant in the area of training young ones, but, also because, language is dynamic and there is the need for them to be conscious of the changes in the teaching of the subject in order to perform optimally. However, it has been observed that many teachers have not changed the way they teach since they started their teaching profession. This implies that teachers will continue to produce the same result if they continue to teach the way they are used to and much should not be expected to change in years to come if the trend continues.

In literature, various terms are used when discussing professional development of teachers. Such terms include: continuous professional development (CPD), professional learning, on-the-job training, in-service training, career advancement, staff development, among others. According to Murray (2010), teachers' professional development consists of activities a teacher can engage to keep abreast a new development, evaluate, and improve his classroom performance. Such activities according to him include participating in in-service courses and workshops, continuing graduate study and participating in reading professional journals among others. Professional development includes formal experiences (such as attending workshops and professional meetings, mentoring, etc.) and informal experiences (such as reading professional publications, watching television documentaries related to an academic discipline, etc.). Mizell (2010) added that when people use the term "professional development," they usually mean a formal process such as a conference, seminar, or workshop; collaborative learning among members of a work team; or a course at a college or university. However, professional development can also occur in informal contexts such as discussions among work colleagues, independent reading and research, observations of a colleague's work, or other learning from a peer.

Fadele (2015) claimed that continuous research on teachers' professional development will help to create an empirical knowledge base that links various forms of professional development to effective teacher learning. However, having the knowledge of effective forms of teachers' professional development alone is insufficient to ensure successful professional development for teachers. That is, it is not enough for teachers to know, there is also the need for them to practise what they know. However, their awareness and perception of it will go in long way in determining their utilisation of what they know.

Fadele (2015) viewed awareness as a feature of practical action which is systematically accomplished within developing course of everyday activities. According to her, it is a social activity in that we take cues from those things around us which we can influence our awareness and lead to a greater shared awareness. It can be deduced from this definition that awareness is something that keeps reminding one about something, without one actually trying actively to search that information.

Ogunrin (2011) stressed that perception plays a very important role in organisation because people's actions are based on their perception of what truth is, not on the truth itself. Their *decisions might be biased or might be taken under pressure. On perception, Richards and Farrel(2015) noted from their research that there is evidence of much variation in the teachers' perception, knowledge and understandings of the processes and products of professional development. This line of thought is supported by Fadipe, 2015 asserts that professional development may be perceived differently by individual teachers. Mukeredzi (2013) explained that as most teachers are not usually consulted of their professional development needs, they often perceived their professional development experience to be extraneous to the improvement of their teaching practice. This in turn makes it difficult for the teachers to incorporate the knowledge and skills gained from the professional development experienced into their practice as the reforms intended.

Muhammed (2019) opined that teachers' professional development has two main phases: initial preparation and continuing professional development. Initial teacher training most often takes the form of full-time residential pre-service programmes in teachers' colleges or universities. Initial training may also be available to serving unqualified teachers through distance education, 'out-of-school' programmes during vacations or on release from schools for extended periods of time. The professional components of initial teacher training programmes can be either consecutive or concurrent with

academic subject. Continuing professional development of teachers comes from various sources and agencies, and in various forms: orientating teachers to curriculum or examination changes, upgrading qualification levels, donor-funded projects, professional teachers' associations in developing subject teaching (e.g. Science Teachers' Association of Nigeria 'STAN'), or sometimes teachers' unions, school-based improvement initiatives, or individual teachers working to improve their qualifications, career prospects or teaching skills. Thus, CPD may be regarded as all forms of 'in service', 'continuing education', 'on-the-job training', 'workshop', 'post-qualification courses' etc., whether formal or informal, structured or unstructured, teacher-initiated or system-initiated, accredited or not.

Adeosun (2011) added that it is obvious that the journey from being a novice teacher to becoming an expert will be facilitated, quickened and made less stressful by planned continuing professional development programmes. In so doing, the role of professional development is to aid teachers in building new pedagogical theories and practices and to help them develop their expertise in the field .In this view, Komba (2008) opined that a professional teacher is a living model for the young learners who are under his control and he is nurturing them and makes them grow and develop fully so as to make them useful person for the society and the development of the nation. Ogunrin (2011), thus, stated that if the primary purpose of professional development is to improve the learning outcomes of students, then the first goal of any professional development model should be to change the way each teacher actually teaches.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner (2017) affirmed that teacher professional learning is of increasing interest as one way to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century. Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop student competencies such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction. In turn, effective professional development (PD) is needed to help teachers learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills. As demands for deeper and more complex student learning have intensified, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers have begun to think more systematically about how to improve teachers' learning from recruitment, preparation, and support, to mentoring and other leadership opportunities. Sophisticated forms of teaching are needed to develop 21st century student competencies, such as deep mastery of challenging content, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, effective communication and collaboration, and self-direction. In turn, opportunities are needed for teachers to learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills.

Obviously, the field of language teaching is subject to rapid changes, both as the profession responds to new educational paradigms and trends and as institutions face new challenges as a result of changes in curricula, national tests, and student needs. As a result, teachers need regular opportunities to increase their professional knowledge and skills, that is, opportunities for professional development.

In short, language teachers have different needs at different stages of their careers, and the needs of the school and institutions in which they work also change over time. The pressure for teachers to have the latest information on issues such as: curriculum trends, second language acquisition research, composition theory and practice, technology, or assessment is intense, and it is the school and the classroom that provides a major source for future professional development. Thus, foreign language teachers have very specific requirements for professional development that include maintaining language skills, increasing cultural knowledge, and keeping abreast of the latest developments in the field that will enhance their performance in the classroom.

Also, the claim that teachers' professional development cannot be divorced from their initial training has been faulted by some researchers (Egbo, 2011; Adeosun, 2011) as being incapable to equip would-be teachers for the 21st century demands and produce teachers who are properly grounded in pedagogy and content as well as having the ability to collaborate professionally in a working environment. According to these researchers, a significant number of Nigerian teachers are not equipped to deliver quality education for a number of interconnected reasons chief among them being training-related issues (policy, structural and curricular), infrastructural limitations and low morale as Nigerian education no longer offers to beneficiaries what it used to.

Mohammed (2019), added that one of the key elements of teacher quality is the provision of adequate opportunities for personal growth and professional development. Indeed, the continuing professional development of teachers ought to be an issue of central concern to all those who care about the quality of tuition in schools. Research on teacher education has consistently stressed the need to regularly provide opportunities for teachers to improve their knowledge of the subject matter they teach and the teaching skills they learned in the pre-service courses they attended. This is based on the recognition of the fact that we live in a rapidly changing world, such that whatever knowledge and skills teachers acquired in their pre-service training becomes stale very fast as new challenges and realities emerge in the socio-economic and political environments.

In view of this observation, teachers' professional development becomes imperative as an alternative source to make up for the deficiencies and weaknesses observed with teachers' initial training in equipping teachers to maximally discharge their duties in the era of globalisation and technological changes which brought with it variations in the population of learners and also variation in the skills expected to be mastered by the students to fit into the society.

To be an effective teacher requires a combination of professional knowledge and specialized skills as well as personal experiences and qualities. And adding to knowledge base and acquiring new skills are among the main reasons teachers participate in professional development activities (Mizell,2010). In this light, Murray (2010) commented that teachers all around the world face similar challenges due to the very nature of school environments. They teach their classes independently from their colleagues, which makes them feel isolated. Sometimes teachers, especially those who are new to the field, can become overwhelmed by the demands of school

bureaucracy, and if teachers do not receive regular supervision or feedback, they can become frustrated. Professional development activities can alleviate some of these issues. Such activities can also bring together teachers who have similar experiences and interests. Just having the opportunity to share experiences and ideas with colleagues can help a teacher gain a sense of community and belonging.

Thus, Fadele (2015) posited that the term "professional development" usually mean increasing teachers' awareness of teaching profession, how it works and how they can improve their work, and the professionalization of teaching. Villegas-Reimers (2016) added that given the recent understanding of the profession and the professional development of teachers, in which we tend to be reflective practitioners, it is necessary to look at the teacher as a professional who is not only active in the development of students' knowledge, but active and self-directed in building their own competence and self-development. This concept mean to look at teacher professional development through design, and almost no reception of knowledge, where teachers are active participants, that it is a continuous and long-term process that is closely linked to everyday teaching practice, and education reforms, it is about collaborative process in which teachers are not mere interpreters of other people's research and theories, but the researchers themselves, and that is very important context in which knowledge will be implemented.

According to Wobmann (2014), students' achievement is produced by several inputs in the educational process. Such inputs include but are not limited to student's family background characteristics, class size, availability of teaching and learning materials, and teacher characteristics. The teacher as an input is the principal factor in education provision and thus affects the quality of education in a significant way. Fadipe (2015) added that apart from students, teachers are the largest and most crucial input of educational system that influences to a great extent the quality of educational output. The deduction from the above assertions by Fadipe is that if the teacher is the principal factor in education provision, there is the need to help the teacher to perform optimally and one sure means of doing that is through TPD.

Many English language teaching experts believe that ongoing professional development is essential, especially in today's world of constantly changing technology. Teachers of English who have been trained to use new techniques and resources are more inclined to try them with their students (Fareo,2013). This is highly imperative when one considers the role of English language in Nigerian education. As a fast-rising world language, English language is important for anyone and nation that want to maximise all the opportunities that globalisation and technological innovations afford.

Various models for teachers' professional development have emerged. According to Mohammed (2019), research has indicated two most commonly used models in Nigeria: the workshop model and the school-based teacher professional support model. The workshop model entails drawing participants out of their schools to a venue where they are exposed by experts to a core of information and skills. The workshop may be short or long-term. The nature of skills and processes to be acquired also vary. This is the most common form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) model in Nigeria. The school-based teacher professional support and mentoring model is an alternative strategy for in-service training of teachers. Here, pupils, teachers, supervisors and facilitators are involved collaboratively in carrying out a series of classroom/school-based activities that will help the teacher to improve. The teacher gets professional support from facilitators and supervisors who serve as mentors. Activities may include direct classroom support by the facilitators and supervisors; staff meetings within the school and involving head-teachers and the participating teachers; demonstration lessons by teacher-educators or mentors; visits to the school by mentors (if external).

In this light, the National Teachers' Institute was mandated by Act No 7 of 1978 to organize programmes for upgrading and updating practicing teachers at all levels, a task, which it has been engaged in since its establishment. In Nigeria, unlike other countries, the re-training of teachers has not received the desired attention from Local, State and Federal Government. There has not been any systematic attention to update regularly the knowledge and skills of teachers in the light of the changes in curriculum and the wider society. This neglect has in turn affected the quality of teaching in schools. It is in recognition of this fact that the Federal Government has, under the Millennium Development Goals Project, directed the institute to retrain teachers in Nigeria. Also, the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is another body that has been involved in the registering of teachers as well as organising seminars for teachers. The major mandates are the regulation and control of the teaching profession at all levels of the Nigerian education system, both in the public and private sectors. Research has, however, shown that private sector of education has not benefitted much from the little efforts made available by these bodies in organising professional development programmes for teachers. This is worrisome when one is to consider the number of private secondary schools in Nigeria.

State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) cannot be left out in the discussion of teachers' professional development as the board do organise training sessions for teachers. This is, however, limited to basic education (primary and junior secondary school) teachers. It has also been reported that many teachers are not aware of various professional development opportunities (workshops, seminars, post-qualification upgrade) especially in the public schools. In explaining reason(s) for this disparity, one cannot but ask this question: are teachers in Ondo aware of teachers' professional development?.

Owing to the importance of TPD, research from different countries, some of which are discussed below, have tried to delve into the subject matter from different perspectives with varied results. Komba (2018) studied the perception and practice of teachers' professional development by 184 respondents which include head teachers, primary school teachers, ward education coordinators, district education officers, school inspectors and members of the school committee in six school districts. He found out that majority of the respondents perceived TPD as being important as it improves the teacher professionally, academically and technically. However, most respondents thought it was inadequately

supported and motivated. His findings also indicated a conception and practice of TPD which combines both the raising of teachers' academic qualifications and professional growth.

Similar to this is the study of Ravhuhali, Kutane and Mutshaeni (2015) which investigated teachers' perceptions of the impact of CPD on promoting quality teaching and learning. The resultsshowed that teachers recognise the impact of professional development in broadening their pedagogical and contentknowledge, teaching skills and strategies to improve student's learning. Results also showed that teachers are undergoingprofessional development initiatives in order to gain financial rewards. The study concluded that many teachers havelow awareness of professional development outlets. The study recommended that adequate financial rewards be put inplace to encourage and motivate teachers when furthering their studies as part of CPD. Further research into the factors influencing teachers furthering their studies as part of professionaldevelopment in South Africa should be undertaken.

In another study carried out by Fadipe (2015), it was discovered that there was significant influence of in-service training on teachers' attitude to work in Cross River State,Nigeria. Another study by Omotuyole and Okudo (2019) examined teachers' accessibility to professional development as a tool for sustainable development using 150 teachers randomly selected from urban and rural areas of Lagos state, Nigeria. The study found *that for most teachers, training ends as soon as they graduate. No opportunities exist for updating and enhancement of their knowledge and skills in order to ultimately improve on their classroom practice. It was also revealed that government-sponsored in-service training workshops and seminars for pre-primary school teachers are very few and irregularly organized.* The concern about these crash programmes and the upgrading activities revolved around appropriateness of perception and practices of TPD.

The inference from the above studies is that TPD has enjoyed a fair share of research attention. However, some of these studies focused on significance of TPD to public school teachers' performance and subsequently, students' academic achievement, while the English language teachers awareness of TPD at secondary schools in Ondo has not been given adequate research attention in recent time.

Statement of the problem

In literature, there are many studies on teachers' professional development to show its importance and relevance for teachers today. Teachers' professional development has been recognised by scholars from different countries as a sure means to keep teachers abreast of latest developments and current practices in teaching and learning process owing to the fact that knowledge is dynamic. It has also been identified as a necessary tool in equipping teachers with the needed skills to cope with the dynamism of the profession and perform optimally since teachers cannot continue to teach the same way they have been teaching for years and expect different results. Previous studies have focused on professional development obstacles, the effect of Teacher Professional Development on teachers' and students' performance with little emphasis on finding out teachers' awareness of TPD. To this end, this study investigatedteachers' awareness of professional development activities in Ondo City, Nigeria.

Research question

The study provided answers to the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of English language teachers in public secondary schools in Ondo City?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the awareness of TPD by male and female teachers.

Scope of the Study

This study investigated English language teachers' awareness of professional development at senior secondary schools in Ondo city, Nigeria. It covered S.S 2 English language teachers from ten (10) Senior Secondary Schools in Ondo city, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study investigated English language teachers' awareness of professional development activities at senior secondary schools in Ondo city, Nigeria. The study revealed the level of teachers' awareness of professional development activities. Teachers' professional Association in Nigeria such as English Association would benefit from the study as it will reveal areas of professional development needs of the English language teachers in the teaching of English language in Ondo city, Nigeria.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was adopted. The participants were 10 English Language teachers .teaching SS2 English. Teachers' Awareness of Professional Development Questionnaire (r=0.84) was used in data collection. The English language teachers teaching SS two classes and SSII students of the participating schools were informed about the purpose of the research and what it entailed. Also, briefing sessions were organised for teachers that participated in the study. These preliminary activities took about one week. This was followed by the training of two students in Language Education as research assistants who helped to administer the instrument. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of mean and percentage as well as inferential statistics of t-test to determine gender difference in teachers' awareness of professional development at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One:

Table 1: Teachers' awareness of Professional Development

s/n	Items	NA	A
1	I have heard of teachers' professional development	2(20.0%)	8(80.0%)
2	Seminars, workshops and conference are forms of professional development	1(10.0%)	9(90.0%)
3	Professional development can be self-sponsored	4(40.0%)	6(60.0%)
4	Mentoring by experienced English language teachers in my school can help me develop professionally	2(20.0%)	8(80.0%)
5	Sharing ideas with English language teachers from different countries through networking can help me develop professionally	3(30.0%)	7(70.0%)
6	Engaging in self-assessment is a means of developing professionally as teachers	1(10.0%)	9(90.0%)
7	Team-teaching is a form of professional development	3(30.0%)	7(70.0%)
8	Feedbacks from inspection can help me develop my career	5(50.0%)	5(50.0%)
9	Accessing researches on English language teaching can improve my career	3(30.0%)	7(70.0%)
10	Teacher's professional development helps teachers to improve their lesson delivery	1(10.0%)	9(90.0%)
11	Engaging in further studies can promote professional development for teachers	-	10(100.0%)
12	Attending regular conference can improve my work as a teacher	2(20.0%)	8(80.0%)
13	Participating in workshop is a professional development scheme	10(100.0%)	-
14	Belonging to professional teachers' association is part of teachers' professional development	5(50.0%)	5(50.0%)
15	Inviting subject specialist to schools is a professional development	3(30.0%)	7(70.0%)

Table 1 revealed on the average that teachers' level of awareness of different professional development activities is high (70.0%) as more than half of the respondents are aware of such activities.

Testing the Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' awareness of professional development activities**.**

Table 2: T-test comparison of male and female teachers' awareness of professional Development Activities

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	df	t	P	Remark
Male Students Female Students	4.95 5..01	0.77	4 6	8	2..24	0. 18	Not Sig.

Not Sig. at .05 level

Table 2 showed that there was no significant difference in male and female teachers awareness of professional activities ($t_{8)}t$= 2.24; p>.05). Hence, the hypothesis is notrejected.

Discussion of Findings

Teachers' Awareness of Professional Development Activities

Finding revealed that the level of awareness of professional development of English Language teachers in public senior secondary schools in Ondo City is high. With many of the respondents indicating that they are aware that engaging in further studies is a form of professional development, it can be deduced that the most common form of professional development that teachers are aware of is engaging in further studies. A probable explanation for this finding is the fact that it has been established through research that teachers stand to gain a lot from professional development activities and their perception will go a long way in maximally optimising all the opportunities that professional development programmes afford. This finding agrees with Ogunrin(2011), Richards and Farrel (2015), Mukeredzi (2013), Fadele (2015) who reported poizstive disposition of teachers to professional development activities. However, the finding is at variance with Omotuyole and Okudo (2019) who reported that teachers' level of awareness of professional development activities was very low.

Gender Difference in Teachers' Awareness of Professional Development Activities

The findings further revealed that there was no significant gender difference in teachers' awareness of professional development activities. The hypotheses tested revealed that no significant difference existed between male and female teachers awareness of professional development activities in senior secondary schools in Ondo city, Nigeria.

This is rather surprising because there is an age long belief that females are better in language teaching. This finding contradicts that of Oyekunle (2020) who reported a significant difference in pedagogic illocutions of male and female teachers in science classrooms in Ondo City, Nigeria in favour of female teachers.

Conclusion

The study investigated English Language teachers' awareness of professional development activities in selected public schools in Ondo City, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the level of awareness of English language teachers in private secondary schools in Ondo Cityof Professional Development activities was high. Also, there was no gender difference in the awareness of English Language teachers of professional development activities. It can, therefore, be concluded that teachers' high level of awareness of professional development could influence the extent to which such activities are embraced by teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

English language teachers' should acquaint themselves with various professional development outlets for improved professional competence.

Teachers schools should continue to engage themselves in professional development activities aimed at developing them for effective teaching. English language teachers in public schoolsin Ondo City should attend local and foreign conferences to keep them abreast of new trends in the teaching of English Language around the world.School management should support their teachers by creating an enabling environment so they can have access to professional development activities.

References

Adeosun, O. (2011). Teacher education programmes and the acquisition of 21st century skills:issues and challenges in Nigeria. Retrieved February 10, 2018, from http://program.corp.at/cdrom2011,pp873?

Darling-Hammond, L. and McLaughlin, M.W. (2017). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Kappanmagazine.org* 92.6: 82.

Egbo, B. (2011). Teacher capacity building and effective teaching and learning: A seamless connection. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 2.5:1-7.* Retrieved March 5, 2018 from www.mcser.org/images/stories/MJSS-S..

Fadele,D.O. (2015). Professional Development Obstacles among English Language Teachers in Oyo Town. *Unpublished M.Ed. Project*. University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Fadipe, J. O. (2015). Quality control in education: the teacher factor. In Ajayi, T. E. andFadipe, J. Skills improvement programme for effective performance of teachers in Nigerian schools. *A publication of National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration* (NIEPA), Ondo, 128-143.

Fareo, D. O. (2013). Professional development of teachers in Africa: a case study of Nigeria. *The African Symposium* 13.1:63-68.

Komba, W.L. (2018). Teacher professional development in Tanzania: perceptions and practices. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education,* 11.3: 67-83. Retrieved February 10, 2018 from birbhum.gov.in>DPSC>reference

Mizell, H. (2010). Why professional development matters. Oxford OH, USA. Retrieved online July 10, 2018 from www.learningforward.org/advancing/whypdmatters.cfm

Muhammed, A. H. (2019). Creating opportunities for continuing professional development of teachers: The National Teachers Institute (NTI) experience. In Fareo, Dorcas O. 2019. Professional development of teachers in Africa: a case study of Nigeria. *The African Symposium* 23.1:63-68.

Mukeredzi, T. G. (2013). Professional development through teacher roles: conceptions of professionally unqualified teachers in rural South Africa and Zimbabwe. Journal of Research in Rural Education, 28.11:1-16. Retrieved February 10, 2018 from http://jrre.psu.edu/articles/28-11.pdf

Murray, A. (2010). Empowering teachers through professional development. *English Teaching Forum* 1. Retrieved March 5, 2018 from https://americanenglish.state.gov>files

Ogunrin, A.B. (2011). Perception of Nigerian teachers about in-service capacity development: an empirical filed sample report on Oyo State, Nigeria. *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 3.3: 743-757.

Omotuyole, C. and Okudo, A.R. (2019). Professional development of early childhood and language education teachers for sustainable development. *IOSR Journal of Research and Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)* 4.2.1: 1-6. Retrieved February 10, 2018 from www.iosrjournals.org

Ravhuhali, F. Kutame, A.P. and Mutshaeni, H.N. (2015). Teachers' perceptions of the impact of continuing professional development on promoting quality teaching and learning. *International Journal of Educational Science* 10.1; 1

Richards, J.C. and Farrell, T.S.C. (2015). *Professional development for language teachers*. New York: Cambridge University Press.