

## **THE IMPLICATIONS OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDHOOD TEACHERS/CAREGIVERS IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper defined capacity building programmes for teachers and care givers as as those activities that are designed to boost the job performance of childhood teachers and care givers. It contends that there are errors in the organization, selection and management of teacher capacity building programmes in Nigeria. It justifies its position by explaining that participation are done by proxy, those selected are chosen on favoritism and there are no follow-up measures to ascertain whether the retrained teachers acquire the needed skills or not. Consequently the paper advocates for alternative approach to the funding and participation of teachers. It advocates a situation where participation in capacity building programmes are purely on the teachers' evolution and sponsorship. It however admitted that the alternative approach to teachers' capacity building programmes where teachers are to sponsor their training and later refunded to have a criticism because it may warrant teachers to shun attendance to capacity building programmes. It therefore among other things suggests that since the process of selecting teachers for retraining programmes are strongly criticized, the government agencies and those who select the teachers must invent a method where those who will attend are subjected to a selection process through simple balloting approach and that considering that teachers who attend capacity programmes are paid whether they acquire the skills or not, those who pay them should abolish instant payments and pay them when they have been able to demonstrate the skills during teaching and learning.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Capacity building programmes is a major requirement for overall growth and development of any organization. For any organization to attain its goal, it must improve the performance of its workers. At any level of the educational industry, capacity building is crucial for the attainment of educational goals. For this reason, it becomes important to prepare both the teachers and caregivers for effective educational delivery. Those who teach at the childhood level appears to be in most need than other category of teachers because they lay the foundation upon which other levels of education build upon. The axiom that they are expected to be the most retrained personnel through capacity building programmes is no lie but in practical terms, they seems not to undergo retraining programmes. The reasons for their inability is tied to several factors, some such factors are the unwillingness of government to retrain them, their salaries and wages are not huge to enable them undertake programmes that will help to improve the worth of their service, the schools where they work do not consider it a responsibility to undertake capacity building programmes. Consequent to these barriers, teachers and caregivers find it difficult to participate in teacher capacity building programmes. Since engaging teachers with capacity building strategies is important, there is the need to make alternative ways of retraining care givers and teachers. Whatever may be the option for teacher retraining

programmes, some fears are exercised. The worry that, alternative options may mean making much demands from the teachers and caregivers who seem to be over saddled with both professional and personal challenges suggests that there must be implications of the alternative approaches of the conventional approaches to teacher capacity building programmes on the system.

It is against this background that this write up is organized to among other things tackle the following:

1. what is childhood education?;
2. what is teacher capacity building programmes?;
3. forms of teacher capacity building programmes
4. what are the conventional/alternative approaches to teacher capacity building programmes?;
5. what are the implications of the alternative approaches to teacher capacity building programmes;
6. conclusion; and
7. suggestions.

### **DEFINITIONAL ATTEMPT OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

Childhood education can be used to mean day care, pre-primary and primary school education. The National Policy on Education (2014) respectively defined pre-primary and primary education as a one year education programme for children within five years before they are admitted into primary school while primary education is the education for children within the ages 6-12. The age as specified by the National Policy on Education means that the education given to children before they proceed to secondary school can be regarded as childhood education. It is important to acknowledge that the definition did not accommodate children under day care who naturally are under the care of care givers. This is to say that childhood education is made up of three components namely day care, pre-primary and primary education.

A perusal of the intentions of government as regards the goals of pre-primary and primary education as spelt out in the National Policy on Education and the definition projected by this write up, it can be interpreted to mean the level of education that lays the foundation for individuals and by extension the society. In corroboration, Anerio (2018) noted that the period in question marks the beginning of rational activity in children. Within this period, children begin to master events and activities that demand intellectual and mental operations such as addition, subtraction, division, multiplication, and categorization of numbers, people, events and actions. These activities carried out by children point to one major issue which is marking the foundation stage of life. If the postulation is true, it means that pre-primary and primary education is the hub for both individual and societal development. Therefore, all elements involved in their processes need the best attention so as to attain set goals. In other words, one cardinal goal of pre-primary and primary education is to equip the individuals with the rudiments of being self-sustaining. This view justifies why the operators of the pre-primary and primary school education being the teachers and care givers must be given the best training and retraining programmes otherwise referred to in this paper as teachers' capacity building programmes.

### **WHAT IS TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME**

The meaning of teacher capacity building programmes has attract different definitional attempts by some scholars. Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) explain that teacher capacity programmes means the training of teachers such that they acquire the needed attitudes, skills, knowledge and experiences that would enable them carry out their functions

at an acceptable degree of efficiency and effectiveness. The terms teacher effectiveness and efficiency naturally attracts explanations. Egbo (2011) explaining this, has it that teacher capacity building is key to successful teaching and learning and also acts as a commencement point to bring revival into the entire educational industry. Interpreting the position of Egbo as regards what is teacher capacity building programmes, one sees it as that which is key to productivity in education. Teacher capacity building programmes can therefore be understood as those activities that are designed to boost the job performance of the teachers and care givers. Naturally speaking one expects that those in charge of education at both the schools and ministry will take the business of teacher capacity building serious. Unfortunately, the government, school administrators and teachers do not take the issue serious. It is on the bases of this observation that there is the need to explore alternatives in the bid to ensure that capacity building for teachers are not abandoned. Before delving into alternatives, there is the need to x-ray the common teacher capacity building programmes practiced at the childhood level of education.

### FORMS OF TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES

Teacher capacity building programmes occur in many forms. The common forms in Nigeria are talk-shop, workshop, mentorship, seminar and conference. At this point, there is the need to briefly discuss on each of them.

**Talk-shop:** This can be organized on daily, weekly or periodically as occasion demands. It is a situation where one of the teachers or a guest who is more knowledgeable or experienced in a particular area is called upon to talk to the teachers or care givers in the school on how to go about a particular event or programme. Examples of such programmes or events could be how to receive or attend to parents or visitors, handle new teachers, handle a child newly admitted into the class and many more. This form of capacity building takes more of an informal form among the teachers. It is not wrong for the school heads to constitute this form as a formal approach to teacher capacity building programme.

**Workshop:** It is a process where teachers are brought together to learn from one another. In some cases, it requires practical handling of materials so as to either learn how to do things or to get something produced. The issues tackled at workshops are designed to improve the performance of both the teachers and the school at large. Workshops expose teachers to issues that have to do with pedagogy, active learning, collective participation of teachers and pupils, health, class and school administrative issues among others. Considering the dividends of workshops, Uya (2004) explains that teachers and care givers can undertake on-the-job re-orientation from time to time. The essence of organizing regular workshops is to enable those who teach and care for children to among other things develop better ways of teaching methodology, subject matters and daily school activities. Since workshops impart on teaching methods, subject matter, daily school activities, it will go a long way in making the teachers and care givers perform their jobs credibly.

**Mentorship:** Teacher mentorship is not commonly practiced in Nigeria. It is an approach where a mentee teacher is allowed to have one-on-one interaction with the mentor teacher who is a highly qualified and experienced person. This form permits the mentor to engage the mentee in micro or practical teaching experiences, provides counselling/tutorial experiences and dwells heavily on pedagogical issues. It is normally an effective form of teacher capacity building programme if well implemented. Commenting on teacher mentorship, Anero (2012) observes that in order to adopt teacher mentorship as an approach for teacher capacity building programme, the managers of the schools at both the school level and ministry need to engage Lecturers from higher institutions to mentor the teachers

through regular visits and supervisions. This practice if well implemented will obviously impact positively on the teacher, the child and the school at large.

**Seminar:** Observation indicates that seminar is where two or more experts of a particular specialty of a given profession formally present a lecture or teaching to other persons to learn from the ideas and knowledge expressed by the seminar presenter. The presenter may be sourced from either within or outside the institution or school. It is considered as an effective form of teacher capacity building programme. It is one of the commonest practiced teacher capacity building programmes. It targets to improve quality of teaching and learning. In terms of its organization, the Federal Government (2014) through her National Policy on Education section 9 subsection 149e stressed the need for quality assurance officers to organize forums for teachers so as to improve their professional know how. The need to improve professional competence of teachers has gained several comments. One among such comments is Anamuah-Mensah and Erinso (2007) who observed that above 20% of primary school teachers in Sub-Sahara Africa lack training while many others need to upgrade their skills or additional training so as to enhance their performance. Following the submission made by Anamuah-Mensah and Erinso, it is important that measures such as adopting seminar as a form of improving the teaching capacity of teachers need to be put into practice. It is also important to point out that seminar is one of the cheapest form of teacher capacity building programmes and if not utilized; it means that the teachers and care givers may rarely undergo any form of teacher retraining programme.

**Conference:** Naturally, it is the meeting of a people from the same profession to discuss issues of importance. In most cases it is organized by professional bodies. It is also observable that the attendance in most cases is voluntary. For the purpose of improving oneself in a given practice or profession, practitioners are optionally urged to attend conferences. In a given conference, a particular subject is exhaustively discussed and may last for some days. Considering the positive impart made by the different teacher capacity building programmes, one is justified to assert that teacher capacity programmes can be described as a veritable instrument that enable teachers to lay the foundation for better job performance. It can therefore be concluded that the implementation of different capacity building programmes for teachers serves as a panacea to lay the foundation that can usher the child and the society attain efficiency in anything they do.

### **CONVENTIONAL/ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES**

Conventionally, the organization and sponsorship of teacher capacity building programmes is the responsibility of government and its agencies. Observation over the years indicates that the Ministries of Education, Universal Education Boards, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and other government agencies have been responsible for the finance and management of all forms of teacher capacity building programmes. The practice where the government and her agents have being the sole sponsors and managers of teacher capacity building programmes appears not to have been very effective. The government and her agents are accused of not leaving up to expectations in this regard because of some observed anomalies. Some such short comings are:

1. selection of teachers and care givers to attend retraining programmes are done on grounds of favoritism because the teachers are paid stipends as they attend the programmes;
2. it is not regularly organized;
3. venues are not accessed with easy by all participants most especially those from the rural areas;

4. government do not organize a follow up to determine if the teachers put what they learn during such trainings into practice; and
5. sometimes topics or issues discussed at the training grounds may not be relevant to the local needs of both the learner and the teacher.

Following the short comings associated to the current method where the government and her agents are fully in charge of teacher and care givers retraining programmes there is the need to advocate for other ways of organizing teacher capacity building programmes. The organization, funding and selection of the participants is what this paper refers to as alternative approaches to teacher capacity building programmes. In the bid to proffer options contrary to the existing approach as stated in the preceding paragraph, the teachers must be made to realize that they are the architect of their destiny. This to say that they should be made to realize that attending capacity building programmes is for their own good. They must therefore take up the responsibility of being retrained. Some measures to be taken to ensure that they take up the responsibility are as follows:

1. The teacher who intends to be retrained shall apply through the school heads to government or their agencies when they need to attend a programme.
2. The retraining programme applied for must be relevant to the teacher's service. The criteria to determine the relevance are but only limited to:
  - a. the applicability or use-ability of the proposed training in real classroom situations;
  - b. applicability or relevance of the proposed training to the immediate environment;
3. On approval, the teacher will attend and show evidence by showcasing the skills acquired when the school supervisors or mentors visit or interact with them. It is on the approval of the visiting mentor that the teacher will be paid.
4. The teachers have to personally attend the programmes and not to be represented by someone else or attend by proxy as it is commonly done during the government funded and managed programmes where the attendee may send someone else to represent him or her.
5. The teachers who attend a particular retraining should be able to teach others in the school or locality.

It is only by keeping to the terms as suggested in this section of the write up that teachers can be retrained to pursue the actualization of the educational goals. Accepting this view, Afe (1992) affirmed that attainment of educational goals is predetermined by the quality and quantity of teachers who are adequately trained and retrained because it is the capacity of the teachers that is the main determinant to the extent the education industry can meet the country's needs. Indeed, the relevance of training and retraining of teachers as a basic tool for teacher capacity building do not need to be over emphasized. A queue into this idea, Egbo (2011) contends that building teacher capacity is critical to effective teaching and learning and therefore emphasized that, it should be a revolving point for repositioning the education system to attain its goal of ensuring that education remains the vehicle for speedy development of the society. On the realization of this fact, it becomes unavoidably necessary for a nation like Nigeria where some of her teachers at the childhood level of education are not professionally trained and re-trained to devot attention to teacher re-training programmes so that the capacity of the teachers can globally compete with others.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHER CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMMES**

As ideal as the alternative approaches to teacher capacity building programmes may be, it cannot be without implications. Some such implications are;

1. Not all teachers will be willing to undergo due process that will be involved in attending capacity building programmes.
2. The few that will attend capacity building programmes under the alternative approach will justify their training by ensuring that they acquire the needed skills.
3. Since not all the teachers will regularly attend the capacity building programme as required, it means that most teachers may be lacking the basic rudiments that will assist them do their job effectively.
4. Since the alternative approach advocates a situation where participation in capacity building programmes by teachers will be voluntary, most teachers would not volunteer to spend their money and time to attend capacity building programmes so most teachers will be found wanting in terms of their capacities to do their jobs as teachers.
5. The government agencies in charge of organizing the normal teacher retraining programmes will frown at the alternative approach.

## CONCLUSION

In Nigeria, retraining of teachers and care givers to improve their capacities is not a new phenomenon or strange to the teaching profession. The age of its practice notwithstanding, the teaching profession most especially at the childhood level do not seem to improve in terms of the quality of teaching and learning. This observation, implies that there is something wrong in teachers training and retraining process. Following this thinking, there is the need to source alternative measures so as to improve the already existing practices. Although no human invention may completely be error free, so the alternative measures to teacher capacity building programmes cannot be without hitches. The teachers therefore must as a matter of necessity ensure that they attend capacity building programmes either at their own cost or under the sponsorship of government and her agencies.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Since the process of selecting teachers for retraining programmes are strongly criticized, the government agencies and those who select the teachers must invent a method where those who will attend are subjected to a selection process through simple balloting approach.
2. Considering that teachers who attend capacity programmes are paid whether they acquire the skills or not, those who pay them should abolish instant payments and pay them when they have been able to demonstrate the skills in their classrooms.

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