

**COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN THE
CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN
NIGERIA: WHO IS DEVELOPING
WHOM?**

By

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are key components for development in any educational system. In Nigeria this is emphasised in the National Policy.

Since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. (FGN, 2004:39)

Until recently, the curriculum of most Teacher Education Programmes (TEP) had no course in computer education (Ekpo, 2002). Many teacher educators graduated from colleges before the new technology was widely used in classrooms. Thus, many secondary school teachers who had their initial teacher training before that period similarly had no relevant experience to use various ICT tools in their teaching and learning. ICT tools are globally used to an advantage in all teaching and learning event. This paper looks philosophically at the consequent issues in collaborative learning within a net work society as they affect the continuing professional development (CPD) of secondary school teachers in Nigeria. It concludes by posing a question: Where is the knowledge-based reservoir for CPD?

Keywords: Nigeria, Collaborative learning, partnership learning, cooperative learning, continuing professional development of secondary school teachers, teacher education programmes.

INTRODUCTION AND FRAME WORK

This paper is purely an exploratory work based on the writer's experiential knowledge as a teacher trainer for nearly two decades now. Firstly, it gives the background to and the practice of collaborative learning in Nigeria. It later gives an overview of the global expectations of a contemporary school teacher and attempts to give the stages of developing a school teacher in Nigeria, outlining pertinent areas that call for effective administration of continuing development programmes. It dwells critically with the consequent issues in adopting collaborative learning technique in the continuing development of secondary school teachers in Nigeria within a network society. For the frame work, the

paper draws on some relevant theories to sustain the argument for an active collaborative learning in the continuing development of secondary school teachers in Nigeria. One of such theories is by a socio-cultural psychologist, Wenger (1998) who argued that knowledge creation and learning take place in communities of practice through complementary processes of participation. Such participation could be in the form of interactions, shared experiences of community members working towards a common goal. Engestrom (2001) similarly observed that in knowledge creation, an expansive learning cycle is evolved when communities and teams come together with different knowledge, expertise, and histories to pursue a common goal. He adds further that to effect change the partners must work through processes of articulating differences, exploring alternatives, modelling solutions, examining an agreed model and implementing activities. From the Christianity's view point as recorded in the fifth book of Moses, Deuteronomy 29:29, the Lord God is the custodian and source of all secret things (wisdom and understanding) but He reveals these in parts to people from generation to generation for specific purposes. These theories and truths are helpful to this writer in creating an understanding and conceptualizing the issues discussed in this paper.

THE BACKGROUND TO COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN NIGERIA

The concept of collaborative learning in the development of teachers is not altogether new to the highly experienced professionally trained teachers in Nigeria. Its use as a learning strategy for the continuing development of teachers may probably not have been fully exploited lately. This is evidenced from the paucity of literature on its use in Nigerian school system. Ukeje (1986) reports of the regimental procedure of training pupil teachers in the late 1960s and 1970s. Looking back now at that process, one can adjudge that a great percentage of the training strategies utilized collaborative learning techniques. Teacher Training then was handled as a close missionary family enterprise, and teaching itself was seen as a helping profession. Good and experienced teachers would voluntarily mentor young in-experienced teachers. Such teachers were individuals who could demonstrate mastery in their subject areas as well as competence in classroom management. The period between 1970s and 1990 witnessed various educational projects aimed at broadening educational scope in the country and these affected the collegial Relationship that existed.. The report of the first national curriculum conference of 1969 was implemented within this period -The Universal Primary Education Scheme commenced in 1976, the 6-3-3-4 (6 years of

primary, 3 years of junior secondary, 3 years of senior secondary and 4 years of higher education) system of education was also launched and the curriculum content for secondary school level was diversified (starting with the first product of the UPE in 1982) to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles of the students (National Policy on Education, FGN, 2004).

Secondary school system was most affected by these educational reforms. These developments put pressure on the few trained teachers. To provide more teachers for the teeming population of students who gained entrance into secondary schools, the federal and state governments introduced teacher bursary and scholarship award schemes to attract more people into the profession. The schemes lured into the profession more people but without aptitude for teaching (Ekpo, 1995). In addition, University graduates with single honours in various disciplines and graduates from polytechnic who could not be employed in their chosen fields got into teaching as 'stop gap'. Teaching became 'all comers' occupation but the least paid. Payment of salaries and allowances to teachers became political issues as some states' governments owed teachers as much as six months salaries at a stretch. The poor service condition and economic hardship among these teaching staff brought about increased engagement in non-academic moonlighting activities (Dike, 2002). There was low incentive for school- based research and writing. Hard work, scholarship and zeal for quality gave way to mediocrity. With the presence of people with such varying interest and aptitude in the profession, the atmosphere for collaborative learning was lacking in many schools. Both the newly engaged teachers and the older ones tended to have very little in common until various schools began to participate in group learning activities like the science quiz, school debates and junior engineer's competitions. These activities brought the teachers together sharing ideas and experiences. A platform for collaborative learning was thus formed.

THE CONCEPT OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Collaborative Learning (CL) is one of the numerous strategies adopted for professional development and it is a method that has received a lot of attention in the literature. It is an educational tool that groups individuals together in order that they may learn from one another.

Johnson (1998) refers to it as an 'active learning technique.' Collaborative learning can be at a one to one level as in mentoring and in small groups

as in tutorials. It is a significant tool for the training of teachers in and outside college. Craft (2000) observed that much professional development in schools rely on collaborative model where problems faced by schools are tackled by collective synergy of communal effort. The term is used in qualifying a learning experience that is open, active, mutually shared, and supportive and it is used interchangeably with concepts like Small group learning, Cooperative learning, Partnership and Active learning. (Bell and Day, 1991; Johnson, 1998, Craft,2000 ; Cannon and Newble ,2003;Gravani and John ,2005) .With recent innovations in the use of ICT in teaching and learning sessions, collaborative techniques are also employed in the Chat rooms ,discussion boards and other web-based group learning activities.

Collaborative learning strategy has a number of advantages as seen from the existing literature. Proponents of collaborative learning have claimed that its characteristic feature of active exchange of ideas within small groups does not only increase interest among the participants, but also promotes critical thinking (Gokhale, 1995) It is further said that learning is enhanced when CL is used more like a team effort than when used as a solo race (Gerdy, 1998 cited by Chan et al, (2005). According to Johnson and Johnson (1998)there is persuasive evidence that cooperative teams achieve at higher levels of thought and retain information longer than students who work quietly as individuals. Still appraising the effectiveness of the learning approach, Cannon and Newble said,

We have found 'cooperative learning' to be a useful method where it is necessary for students to assimilate a lot of material in a short space of time and where adequate learning resources (such as photocopied papers) can be provided, (Cannon and Newble, 2003:34).

There is a need however to ensure that there is an enabling environment for maximizing the effectiveness of this strategy. From Gokhale's studies it was discovered that participants who gained most from cooperative work were those who gave and received elaborated explanations during discussion. In a paper, 'supporting real-time collaborative learning with web-based groupware', Chan et al (2005) give a description of an online tutorial system (WOTS), a web-based tool designed to enhance collaborative work of students. Such support materials further enhances the versatility of collaborative learning technique. It however has some reported weaknesses of time consumption in practice and expensive if mediated.

Collaborative learning through group projects is commonly used in most Nigerian universities. For instance, at the University of Uyo, one of the faculty required courses for the undergraduate education students (seminar in Education) has successfully utilized this technique for some years now. Students have acknowledged that its use has helped them to develop skills in critique, problem solving and decision making approaches. There is however little practical linkage of these learning experiences in schools after graduation. There is poor interaction and exchange of ideas, information and experiences with members of the cooperating school communities where they serve. The acquired experiences could be explored further and harnessed for teachers' continuing development after graduation. Small group learning experiences will definitely develop higher intellectual skills in the teachers as it did with the students earlier cited. From the literature cited in this work, five (5) characteristic features of collaborative learning may be identified as follows:

- in collaborative learning participants can mutually articulate their differences and come up with their needs or problems;
- they can explore all possible alternatives;
- they can model the solutions and evaluate them;
- they can jointly examine an agreed model; and
- finally, implement the innovative activities.

An effectively utilized collaborative learning should be evidenced by the presence of these features. Teachers need a conducive environment to demonstrate these features for their development.

DEVELOPING A CONTEMPORARY SCHOOL TEACHER: GLOBAL EXPECTATIONS

Until the 1990s, continuing development of teachers was taken as a voluntary commitment or some training route for the ambitious career minded teachers. This attitude is no longer acceptable as there are more demands for qualitative education from the public and the learners. Due to diversity of needs, teacher education is multidisciplinary and the teachers are expected to be life long learners. For such reasons, majority of the initial teacher training programmes are re-designed to allow the student teachers acquire knowledge of their specific subject area, knowledge of the pedagogy, management skills and competencies to guide and support the learners as well as furnish them with proper understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions of education generally. The starting point for teacher development therefore is an initial teacher training (ITT). The initial learning experiences acquired are expected to

emphasize both practical skills and academic understanding of the curricula content. It is to train them to identify and analyse problem situations they expect to find in their future work. Such exposure is expected to provide the would-be teachers with competence and confidence to be reflective and innovative practitioners. Even with these, learning and development do not stop there. In practice, not all teachers possess the required competence on graduation. Visionary educational planners envisaged such inadequacies no matter the effectiveness of any ITT programme. The federal government of Nigeria anticipated similar gaps in its TEP and made provisions for it in Section 8: 74 and 75 of the national policy on Education. It reads,

Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. Teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. In-service training shall be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education and shall also take care of all inadequacies, (FGN, 2004:40).

Thus, the development of teachers' professional competencies has to be viewed on the continuum of their professional life. Commenting further on the need to see teachers' development as a life long process, Cornu (2005) stressed that teaching is a profession that requires a professional education and development. He views the ITT and continuing professional development as forming an interdependent continuum.

Teacher education holds a prime position in the development of any nation. Without qualitative teacher education, there can be no national development because their products will be so poorly equipped to effect any meaningful development. The report of the European Union on principles for teacher competencies and qualifications addressed teachers as "key players "in how education systems evolve and in the implementation of the reform (Europa, 2005). The report noted further that" high quality education provides learners with personal fulfilment, better social skills and more diverse employment opportunities ". For the vital roles teachers play in the development, they should be competently developed. Moreover, teachers are not working in isolation. The communities they serve in are dynamic, presenting changes in various information technology and communication media as well as witnessing numerous socio- cultural dispersions. These changes do influence the pupils/students and the school system. Thus, knowledge and skills needed for a whole life career cannot be learnt just once and be relevant for ever. Teacher development programmes are therefore expected to have an

active and intensive link with research work in the field. Teachers need to be open minded towards their assignments and be able to internalise a research- oriented attitude towards their career. They need to see themselves beyond being "dispensers of knowledge "to being active creators of knowledge. With such attitude, they will then take their profession as an intellectually challenging one just like the lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, or accountants do. When teachers value themselves and document their activities and experiences, the community will be forced to recognize their unparallel contribution to development.

Njiemi (2005) is of the opinion that such attitude and relationship will provide the much needed important knowledge-base for teachers' professional work.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: THE STATE OF ART

Nigeria with a population of 137.3 million people has about 7,104 secondary schools spread across its 36 states structure. By policy, seven types of institutions are responsible for the training and re-training of secondary school teachers and these are:

- Colleges of Education Faculties of Education Institutes of Education
- National Teachers' Institute (NTI) Schools of Education in the Polytechnics
- National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN)
- National Mathematical Centre (NMC).

The above listed institutions are expected to produce' highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers, encourage in them the spirit of enquiry, creativity, nationalism and give them a sense of belonging. The academic content of their training is also expected to provide the recipients with intellectual and professional background adequate to any changing situation in the country as well as making them knowledgeable, progressive and effective teachers capable of inspiring the learners to work. (FGN, 2004). It is obvious from the above stated goals that teacher development requires both a professional education as well as professional development- and these are in a holistic package of ITT, Induction, Internship and CPD. Elsewhere it was suggested that the NTI, NNLAN, and NMC concentrate on the re-training of teachers and not be involved with the initial training of teachers (Ekpo, 2005). Of recent, the first specialised university of Education, the Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED) has been established in the country (Editorial of Thisday, 5th Dec. 2005)

The Initial Teacher Training (ITT)

The selection or recruitment for any profession is crucial to the attainment of its goals. For teaching profession, recruitment starts with admission procedures. It is at the point of recruitment that most professions maintain desired standard and consider the issue of status. When schools were fewer, it was possible to select teachers into the profession because prospective students showed evidence of commitment, intelligence, empathy, patience, courage etc which are all attributes of a good teacher. Presently, the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) admits and sends student- teachers to Teacher Training Institutions. Few institutions like the Universities of Lagos, Port Harcourt Nsukka, and Uyo have lately started to screen candidates provisionally admitted through JAMB before registration, (Taiwo, 2005 in Thisday). In the effort to produce enough teachers for the teeming population in the schools, the standard has been unwittingly lowered. But for some percentage of brilliant candidates who selected to read education, the students who go in for ITT are at times both socially and intellectually incapacitated. The national selection procedure encouraged that admission pattern for teacher education because as a requisite for the launching of the UPE scheme in 1976, a 'crash training programme' which greatly lowered standard was introduced. Candidates who failed the West African School Certificate Examinations (WASCE) were recruited into the Gradell teacher programme. Some state governments later followed suit by directing that candidates who failed their junior secondary school qualifying examination be encouraged into TEP. This recruitment procedure gives an impression that teaching is a dumping ground. Surprisingly, despite this lowering of standard to increase the in-take, poor staffing position is not remedied. Teachers are still in high demands. The younger generation find teaching very unattractive and will only select it where they cannot find another alternative (perhaps because of their academic attainment). Thus, the student teachers come into the profession with low motivation requiring more systematic training. However, some initial training institutions do try within their lean resources to brush them up with various remedial programmes and use teaching practice period to develop and heighten their interest in teaching. Moreover, majority (82%) of the secondary school teachers who had their initial training before ICT was widely used in teaching and learning are without this relevant experience (Ekpo. 2002). ICT tools are globally used in education to an advantage. Acquisition of these skills will enable them to access a myriad of free learning resources and information available for teaching and learning.

INDUCTION AND INTERNSHIP

There is no statutorily planned induction or a unified pattern of handling induction into teaching profession in the country. The duration and structure of the induction programme is entirely left at the discretion of the states and or individual schools. Some state governments organize one or two days programmes to introduce the newly employed teachers into the profession-spmne have no organized plan not even as much as being assigned a supervisory senior colleague Ekpo and EKukinam, 2005). According to the report, some newly employed teachers do try to help themselves; thirty percent (30%) of the teachers interviewed admitted they personally found people to help. Interestingly one of the respondents when inquired of the nature of the assistance he received as a newly employed teacher said,' I was shown the scheme of work where I should start from and I was instructed to prepare lesson notes weekly for submission to the head of department'. There is some amount of support and collaboration there but the learning 'climate' lacks mutual respect. There is an air of 'Them and Us' as discussed by Gravani and John, (2005). The newly engaged teachers however, seem to effectively articulate their needs as is evidenced in Ekukinam's work. When asked of their expectations from their Head teacher, LEA Director, and Senior colleagues, the following responses were obtained:

* SENIOR COLLEAGUE	* HEAD TEACHER	* DIRECTOR OF LEA
They should share and exchange ideas, be open to new teachers, should not abandon their classes to the new teachers but should teach while the new teachers watch, Ekpo and Ekukinam, 2005).	They should give new teachers at least a month to understudy senior colleagues and inform them of sources of useful materials and introduce them formally to other members of staff.	they should ensure there are office space arrange seminars for of orientation, and give some financial assistance.

However, there is a concerted effort lately by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRC) to validate and register all categories of professionally trained teachers in the country. With this structure in place it is hopeful that all new entrants to the profession will be given proper orientation and support on appointment.

CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT

For the continuing development of these teachers, the course-based model of professional development is generally employed (Bell and Day,

1991). These are usually the in-service training programmes mostly located in tertiary institutions. Their curricular content is usually very theoretical and based on what the institutions can provide. This developmental route merely enhanced teachers' existing qualifications such that non-graduate teachers with either Gd 11 or NCE certificates could become graduates and those with a first degree could obtain higher degrees or diplomas. This in effect does not address the professional needs because improved qualification may not necessarily enhance professional performance. There is dire need for continuing development of teachers in Nigeria if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for Africa are to be achieved by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2004). Similar opinion was expressed by the director and chief executive of the National Teachers' Institute, Dr. Moddibo Mohammed while receiving officials from the Consortium on Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). He observed very objectively,

There are very few and irregularly organized in-service training workshops or seminars that aimed at enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills. ...most teachers never have the opportunity to improve their knowledge of the subject matter they teach and most importantly to improve their practical skills for the effective implementation of the curricular, (Mamah, 2005 in Vanguard).

From that scenario, it is obvious that the development of most teachers in Nigeria beyond the point of ITT is almost accidental. CPD takes place randomly and haphazardly through chance encounters with other teachers. The teachers learn about their professional roles and acquire relevant skills only by working alongside other teachers. It is true that young professional teachers tend to work in teams (Smethen and Adey, 2005), a learning pattern they had inherited from college. They are more at ease discussing their thoughts and ideas collaboratively. Their lesson plans, records - keeping and evaluations of pupils work are also at times collaboratively handled. Such shared dialogue is the heart beat of the proponents of collaborative learning. It is quite supportive in assisting the teachers' gain a sense of their personal development but the institutional and professional needs ought to be addressed as well for the overall development of the system. The advances in technology and consequent changes in organizational infrastructure now put an increased weight on team work and learning. Concepts like internet, intranet, network society, World Wide Web, global village etc have emerged in recent literature, and

these all point to the need for a collaborative work force for an increased productivity. There is need for group of teachers serving in a particular environment to collaborate for the purpose of achieving an academic goal and reducing stress. (Gokhale, 1995; Lawrence, 1999).

CONSEQUENT ISSUES IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

A teacher's work and the society he lives in are changing so there is need for a more research-oriented approach to his teaching. Nigerian teachers must first accept the fact that their teaching roles have changed and that the society is not static either. They must come with terms that they are lifelong learner requiring collaboration and networking with all sources of information and Knowledge. Teachers who are involved in continuous learning process are active stakeholders in the networked society and will create knowledge. Collaborative learning is evidenced at all levels of a teacher's professional life. It has the potency to generate knowledge which is required for continuing development of any profession. The skills to utilize this strategy have been acquired during their ITT programme and should be explored for their continuing development. If teaching is accepted as a profession based on partnership and teachers seen as major stakeholders in the net work, then teachers must be assisted to keep the link active. Innovative teaching does not just emerge, they are evolved. In innovative teaching, it is the theory that underpins the practice. Where this is lacking teachers teach with old notes and students engage in rote learning. There is an under exploitation of the knowledge-development potential of teachers in Nigeria because educational system has been so politicized.

The ultimate aim of all teacher development programmes is for the improvement of the students' learning but the professional improvement of individual teacher as well as the school system can not be overlooked in a net work society .There are essential prerequisites for effective use of the collaborative learning as a strategy for the development of the three- (the students' learning, the teachers' professional development and, the school system.) There should be right atmosphere to foster collaborative learning wherever the project is based. For instance, the participant's status and interest, their level of involvement, monitoring strategies, implementation, documentation and continuing funding of any collaborative project may be considered as crucial to the successful use of the strategy in continuing development of teachers.

Issues of Teachers Involvement

It is apparent from existing literature that secondary school teachers in Nigeria are knowledgeable of the global trend in education. They are also aware of their training needs and their inadequacies, but the procedure for deciding the content of their training often does not call for inputs from them. Teacher experiential knowledge is crucial to the nature of knowledge created. All the in-service programmes offered besides being sporadic, are 'top- down'. The principals are not at times involved in deciding what the content of the training should be. At one training workshop (Conference of All principals Forum), a principal was asked to assess the success of the training session to meet their needs, and she said, "Nobody asked of my needs before the workshop and how can I know if it has met my needs "The teachers desire to be a part of the planning. Nigerian government may probably be acting in this manner because their CPD programmes are usually not out to improve teachers' job performance skills or develop and extend teachers' professional knowledge. Majority of CPD programmes organized for secondary school teachers are to make them anticipate and prepare for change or to clarify one new policy or the other. Besides, the resource persons often use in such training sessions similarly have the 'top- down' view of professional development. This is not a conducive environment for collaborative learning. A collaborative approach to identify developmental needs could enliven the profession. For instance, if teachers are requested to identify their main priorities for the coming year, this will give them a focus and act as a catalyst for improvement or innovation. It has been noted that adults' learners are more committed to a decision according to the extent of their involvement. Non-involvement of these teachers at the planning stage will make them feel undervalued.

Issues of Status

Issues of status in collaborative learning is quite significant especially if the learning is not on line. When participants have comparable qualifications, experiences and common goals, environments for collaborative learning to thrive will exist. Gravani and John (2005) identify the environmental climate among the participants and their status as being some of the critical issues in collaborative learning. A 'good climate with mutual trust and respect' between the operators tended to foster exchange of ideas and experiential knowledge. With the top-down approach of CPD provision in Nigeria, the teachers' experiences which are the essence for development will be greatly de-valued. To utilize this strategy effectively in Nigeria for CPD, the status of teachers in the

society must be raised and this should start with the admission requirement into ITT institutions. Entry point to teaching profession should therefore be kept attractive to lure into it talented young minds. Lowering of admission requirements will not raise its professional status, rather as Niemi (2005) noted, 'the higher the requirements are the more attractive the profession'. What will raise their status is to pay their salaries and allowances as and when due, and be given salary levels that are relative to those in other comparable jobs. When secondary school teachers, lecturers from ITT institutions and the providers of CDP have a collegial relationship and interact freely on a common goal, collaborative learning will be beneficial to the profession.

Issue of location of CPD

The success of most organized CPD that uses collaborative learning has some bearing on their location. Considering the five characteristic features of collaborative strategy earlier identified, one could say that the participants will have a better interactive environment if the CDP is based at a location that is at close proximity to the teachers' work area. This is because training emphasis has shifting onto school based -teacher development. However, to avoid distractions from schools' daily routines, there is a strong support for school- focused professional development, where the training is done outside the school premises but the programmes have direct impact on teachers' Practices (Craft, 2000; UNESCO, 2004; Teale, 2005) Again, this is an issue requiring attention in Nigeria to ensure effective use of the strategy. The location for such training could be found in the existing LEA structures but there will be need to train the providers first.

Issues of implementation and Documentation

Perhaps of all the issues discussed in this paper, these two, 'implementation and documentation' are the most crucial in increasing knowledge base for CPD. Teachers need knowledge of the most recent advances in research in handling their subject areas . When innovative activities or agreed models are designed as prototypes, there should be a platform to implement them and document the findings or outcome. These constitute the subject-content and pedagogical - content knowledge that will provide the foundation for developing various teaching methods which can eventually be adapted to meet varying teaching and learning needs. Providers of CPD in Nigeria need to pay particular attention to the issue of documentation of findings after implementation because at the end, records will be the evidence. Lack of

documentation of CPD activities could be erroneously taken for no programme.

Issue of Funding

Funding situation of any project determines its sustainability. As observed in the national policy, education generally is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government for successful implementation. Unfortunately as the Director of National Teachers' Institute (N.T.I.) observed, 'funds are rarely allocated or promptly released for short in-service training programmes' (Mamah, 2005 in Vanguard). There is no theory of changes in teaching methodology, ITT content or students learning styles that will actually improve teaching and learning except there is adequate funding.

Education sector is grossly under funded when compared to other sectors. The UNESCO minimum recommendation of 26% budgetary allocation to education sector is yet to be adopted. There is need to empower the head teachers financially if they have to sponsor the participants for CPD. A situation where principals of schools are not given regular financial support to run their administration hinders cooperation from the teachers.

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING IN CPD; who is developing whom?

The overall reason for any educational programme is to improve learning and promote acceptable behavioural traits and values in the learners. With the created scenario, it is pertinent to puzzle over the following:

- Are these newly qualified teachers with low self esteem, limited knowledge of both ICT skills and practice able to make desired impact on the students' learning?
- Are the 'older' teachers with or without knowledge of ICT but with some amount of experiential knowledge capable of improving students learning?
- Are the subject and pedagogical content knowledge provided by ITT institutions generationally reliable and relevance?

If the responses to these three puzzles are in the negative, it means the three parties need each other to develop professionally, improve students' learning and bring benefits to the school system generally. Isolated knowledge does little good to the system. All CPD for teachers should be knowledge-driven. Teachers have been described as experts in creating knowledge about their research and practice (Douglas, 1991) Going back

to Wenger's theory (1998) such knowledge creation should take place in communities of practice through complementary participation.

Knowledge is contributory and every participant in the community knows in part and can also contribute in part to any development. In a network society like an educational system, all the relevant parts collaborate to have a holistic development, involving the teachers, students and the school system. Since collaborative learning is a strategy that can be used at every stage of teachers' professional development, a research oriented learning environment should be created for the researchers and practitioners to work collaboratively creating knowledge and learning from each other. Knowledge so created will increase the knowledge base about teaching profession and enhance their performances.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria like most African countries is facing double challenge in her teacher development pursuits. The first challenge is the initial training of competent teachers in adequate number for the available schools, and secondly, that of upgrading these teachers' knowledge and skills. This often creates additional demand for teacher training capacity. In the face of competing educational needs, continuing teacher development in Nigeria has been greatly neglected. Teachers have merely been given the initial teacher training exposure. One "shot" training is not enough to prepare teachers for the changing classroom. Teachers are the main determinants of success in any educational system and should be competently trained. Teacher Development Programmes provided are sporadic and top down in approach. Teachers are able to identify their training needs if given opportunity to and their experiential knowledge could enhance their performances. Teachers are key components in any educational system and should be valued. Besides being the initiators and facilitators of all learning experiences, they are the producers of knowledge about teaching. Knowledge generated through teachers' experimental and experiential outputs would naturally enhance and increase the knowledge- base about teaching profession. Where this academic activity is lacking, professional development is shallow, lacks focus and motivation. For collaborative learning strategy to be effective in CPD, it should not be an unstructured voluntary or sporadic event. It requires quality programme design which is collaboratively planned and periodically evaluated. Through a systematically plan CPD, secondary school teachers in Nigeria who had their initial training before the wide use of ICT in education could have a forum to interact mutually with both the newly qualified teachers as well as with the instructors from the

various ITT institutions. By adopting this process, problems in teaching and learning will be easily identified, solutions proffer, innovative ideas and knowledge generated for the collective development of teaching profession in the country.

It is the position of this paper that effective use of collaborative learning in a research- oriented CPD programme that is school focused, can breach the identified professional gaps in the development of teachers in Nigeria, an attempt at the creation of knowledge-based reservoir for subsequent CPD programmes will thereby be made.

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