

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A DIGITAL AGE: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION

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Abstract

Teacher professional development in a digital age is gradually moving away from the traditional classroom professional development to a global digital teacher professional development. With the advent of ICT, the Nigerian educational curriculum is capacitated with relevant content geared towards the professional development of the digital teacher and the digital learner. The paper therefore, discussed the concept teacher professional development in the digital age as well as the link between the past and the future. Digital age phobia and teacher resistance to ICT adoption were among the barriers in teacher use of ICT. Some major digital issues such as face book, sexting, cyber bullying, balance, safety and security, copyright and plagiarism as it affect the development of professional teacher where x-rayed. The network services currently enjoyed in Nigeria are part of prospect in the digital age. One of the major recommendations was that government should strategies a uniform law which will curb the ICT crime in Nigeria.

Keywords: Teacher professional development, Digital age.

Introduction

The age in which teachers go into class with a lesson plan as designed by teachers and policy makers is gradually fading away. Rachida and Abir (2012) asserted that new era of education has started where teaching/learning are blended digitally. The society of recent is poised with concern over the dynamic nature of the digital world in respect to its influence on technology curriculum. In as much as the role of teachers in the implementation of information technology curriculum is

paramount, people do look up to them to be able to acquire the required Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills for effective teaching in the digital age. Improving teachers' quality and teaching effectiveness are at the apex of concern among education stake holders of recent. The national policy on education (FRN, 2004) stipulates that education system cannot rise above the teacher. Oluremi (2013) asserted that education is to be used as a tool per excellence for the attainment of national objectives. One of

these objectives is to be able curb with the dynamic nature of the digital world.

Digital world encompasses electronics appliances such as: Videos, Televisions, Public Address System (PAS) and Audio System, DVD Players, Cameras, Projectors, electronic board, digital teacher, digital learners and many others (Gosin, 2013). The language understood by the digital electronics is often 0 and 1, 2D, 3D and so on. This becomes a matter of concern to the oldenday's teachers who were not taught by these recent technologies. Hence becomes scared of acquiring such knowledge to the detriment of the digital learners. This is also applicable even to the 21st century teachers who attended their education in the institutions where these digital electronics were not available or were inadequate. Therefore, teachers are left with high level of digital challenges that requires training and re-training for self and professional development in Nigeria.

Profession is viewed differently by different people. In an attempt to explain profession, Kings (2009) asserted that profession could be an occupation that requires extensive education or specialized training. Tom (2011) viewed profession as **occupation**, line of work, living, vocation, job, career, work or business. The author therefore opined that profession is an occupation or calling in which an individual undergoes a specialize training and study which would lead to the acquisition of required knowledge for gainful employment, self-development and for developing others. It was in line with this

that Tom explained development to mean the process of changing and becoming larger, stronger, or more impressive, successful, advanced, or of causing somebody or something to change in this way. Teacher development entails a professional development to be able to curb with digital challenges in the digital world. Some of these challenges are inadequate: teachers, digital workshops, curriculum content, qualified teachers, technologist and insufficient in-service and pre-service training among others. So far, the government has been able to provide information and communication centers in most of the universities and other institutions in Nigeria towards professional development (Abdullahi 2014).

Professional development in the digital world therefore means rebranding teachers to acquire the required skill to be able to adapt to this dynamic world thereby raising the hope of the society to a greater height. To be discussed next is the concept of professional development in details.

Professional Development of teacher in a digital Age

As was seen from the background, professional development requires rebranding of teachers to acquire the required skill to be able to adapt to this dynamic world thereby raising the hope of the society to a greater height. Professional development of teachers in the digital world could be regarded as continual learning process which has a background right from pre-service teacher training programme to on-the job training. According to Peter (2004), professional development of

teachers could be referred to as a meaningful calling which start consciously or unconsciously. Some teachers truly have the calling for the profession while some happen to be teachers by coincidence. Kings (2009) argued that teacher professional development is regarded as a lifelong learning process which begins with the initial preparations from teachers training colleges to his present on-the job training. In the digital parlance, teacher professional development means mentoring the digital teacher to be able to curb with the dynamic nature of the digital age. The mentorship was done haphazardly not until of recent that number of qualified ICT teachers is gradually increasing. However the digital child who is a future teacher needs a sound digital education. Digital age is away from the analogue age where learning must be a physical interaction between the teacher and the learner. Digital world demands the use of digital appliances with its most essential advantage of saving time and energy, even though it is expensive as the case may be. A big question there in is 'Should teachers teach the learners to have two lives, or one'?

The current technological trajectory promises unfathomable, roller-coaster innovation with no braking system. While the ride is exciting, it moves so quickly that teachers typically don't have time to think about the possible unintended consequences that might accompany it. The result is that teachers find themselves unable to effectively respond to hot-button issues like cyberbullying and sexting because they seem to come out of

nowhere (Jason 2014). Teachers' challenge is to find ways to teach children how to consciously and reflectively navigate the rapidly moving digital age. How teachers meet this challenge depends on how they address the following fundamental question about teaching the digital-age children: Should a teacher teach the children as though they have two lives, or one?

The "two lives" perspective says that children should live a traditional-digitally unplugged life at school and a second, digitally infused life outside school. It says that the digital technology that children use quite naturally is too expensive, problematic, or distracting to use effectively and responsibly at school. It says that issues concerning the personal, social, and environmental effects of a technological lifestyle are not important in a school curriculum, and that kids will have to puzzle through issues of cybersafety, technological responsibility, and digital citizenship without the help of teachers or the education system. In contrast, the "one life" perspective says the opposite and that it is precisely the teachers' job as educators to help students' live one, integrated life, by inviting them to not only use their technology at school, but also talk about it within the greater context of community and society.

If the society wants to pursue a future that celebrates success not only in terms of abundance but also in terms of humanity, teachers must help the digital kids balance the individual empowerment of digital technology use with a sense of personal,

community, and global responsibility. School is an excellent place to help learners become capable digital citizens who use technology not only effectively and creatively, but also responsibly and wisely. But it can be done only if teachers and the society help learners live one life, not two.

History seems to have been gentle in retrospect. Now, the changes come so quickly that the digital world speaks not of ages but of waves, which last only as long as it takes to pass from peak to trough and open up space for the next, unpredictable development that will change everything. Recent history boasts an Internet that has reached a virtual citizenry of two billion members, cell phones that know exactly where you are and what you'd like to eat, and the creation of the first self-replicating life form whose parent is a computer (Venter, 2010). We may not know what's next, but we do know this: The future will be filled with exponential change.

There remains one thing yet to be changed—what Dertouzos (2001) calls "the ancient human" in each of human being. That is, although one can think of wireless bits of information flying through the air and landing on someone else's screen half a world away as something entirely new, one can also view it simply as the latest effort to use whatever tools are available to expand communication with other people, a basic human desire that dates back to the earliest ancestors. Both perspectives are accurate and important in constructing a complete picture of the human condition in the digital age. There is the need to create measures

that will equip the digital teachers with adequate and required techniques of teaching the digital curriculum.

Bringing the students two lives together means that teachers need to set goals that require them to *discover* the technology that is largely invisible to them and to evaluate that technology in terms of its opportunities and responsibilities. Thus, part of teachers' job is to help students not only use technology, but also question it. Imagine how differently a school district might behave with the following goal in place: *Students will study the personal, social, and environmental impacts of every technology and media application they use in school.* Expanding technology's role from mere tool to an area for study and inquiry runs counter to two decades of education technology planning, which has been devoted to simply integrating technology into curriculum and instruction. Yet if the teacher wants the students to be not only skillful technology users but also good neighbors, informed voters, and involved citizens. Some barriers in teachers to using new technology are numerous.

Use of new technology in teaching and tutoring engages teachers but it also creates certain skepticism. According to Tove and Else (2000), a teacher may be quite tiring to get involved in new methods, not least of the technical sort. A feeling of not being able to master the technology or being competent to combine this with the subject matter can prevent the teacher from taking the step necessary to get started. Technical aids often become a victim of reluctance to learn. This is due to many different factors.

Not least than those technical aids that have been so complicated that one more or less had to have technical know-how in order to use these aids, let alone understand them. The development in this field has, however, moved so fast that it is today possible to get access to equipment which is relatively easy to use. Previous experience has shown that good and precise planning is especially important when the use of technology is necessary or desirable in order to carry out a programme.

Technology which does not function often leads to dissatisfaction and frustration and often becomes a barrier for further trials. When, on the other hand, it functions as it should, it becomes part of the learning experience and provides increased motivation for further research. Most teachers today use a computer as a natural instrument, and the barriers for moving this into the classroom, or indeed for moving the classroom out in the district area will be reduced. Financing can also prevent a minimum of equipment being procured, both for teaching, tutoring and the students' own work, whether it is individual or group work. Here one needs long-term planning and goal-related work. It will often, however, be possible to apply for special funding for such things and the development can quickly prove that it leads to savings and new sources of income.

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Issues in the Teacher Professional Development in the Digital world

Here are just a few of the issues that a comprehensive digital citizenship curriculum should address: Understanding how online actions might lead to harm to yourself or others. Includes protecting one's own privacy, respecting that of others, and recognizing inappropriate online communications and sites (such as sexual material and other resources intended for adults). Teachers are required to be careful while teaching the internet aspect of ICT. Understanding the negative consequences of using a cell phone to take and transmit pictures of a sexual nature of oneself or others.

Furthermore, understanding the potentially devastating effects of cyberbullying and how it violates ethical principles of personal integrity, compassion, and responsible behavior. As asserted by Jason 2014, several cases exist in which students who created false Facebook or MySpace pages featuring the names and likenesses of teachers and administrators. On these pages, students published items painting the educators as drug and sex addicts. In some cases school punishments were reversed by courts, due to the fact that the student activity took place off school grounds and presumably was not sufficiently "disruptive" of the school environment to override the students' right to free speech. The victims depicted in these false Facebook pages could very well have filed charges,

however. Understanding past, present, and possible future effects of technology. Cultivating a sense of balance that considers opportunity as well as responsibility, empowerment as well as caution, personal fulfillment as well as community and global well-being. In extension, respecting others' intellectual property rights and reflecting on the legality and ethics of using online materials without permission (a complex and murky area of the law, bounded by "fair use" guidelines) are among the issues in teachers professional development in the digital age.

In fact teachers need to overcome barriers to teaching in digital world. Teachers should learn to do away with digital phobia. A feeling of not being able to master the technology or being competent to combine this with the subject matter should not be the other of the day. Digital equipment should be functional and professionally directed towards the attainment of the national goal on digital education. Other challenges that need to be overcome include inadequacy and unqualified digital teacher, insufficient and non-functional digital instructional materials, lack of Technologist, and workshops. In extension, insufficient digital in-service training for teachers, lack of well equip ICT library and teachers resistant to integrate ICT with their primary assignment are among the current challenges in teacher professional development of digital teacher and the learner that need to be addressed urgently

Prospects of the teacher professional development in the digital age

Digital age has leveraged teachers who have opted to embrace dynamic nature of the digital world in Nigerian education. Some teachers according to Kings, (2009) have however integrated both the analogue world with the digital world with the aim of meeting the teacher professional development needs. Adoption and utilization of ICT is a way forward in the development of professional teachers. In extension, significant efforts have been made by federal government towards installing internet and ICT facilities in Nigerian Universities. Post graduate students of University of Nigeria Nsukka are beneficiaries of such facilities. It is evident where students are seen surfing the net at their comfort in their rooms with iPods, laptops and the like.

However, more is expected from the governments. The societal concern over the dynamic nature of the digital world in respect to its influence on technology curriculum is gradually feeding off owing to the integration of ICT in the Nigerian education curriculum. Government has also made provision for pre-service training for Nigerian teachers and students in most of the institutions. Bank transaction is easy with the introduction of automated Teller Machine (ATM). Therefore, let's embrace the digital curriculum for teacher professional development in the digital world.

Recommendations

- Government should establish more ICT colleges and institutions

- Schools should budget money for the digital facilities
- Curriculum planners should revised the present curriculum to deeply include the required ICT skills
- Uniform laws to curb ICT crimes be made and enforced
- Mentoring and coaching by teachers who are vast in ICT should be encouraged
- Teachers should be engaged in in-service training, seminars and workshop
- ICT libraries and functional workshop be put in place
- Teachers to ensure they possess the required teaching qualification

Conclusion

Change is connected to teachers' mindsets. If teachers are avoiders, they might think that digital education cannot be integrated, and thus might be comfortable with Mindset 1. On the other hand, those teachers who are mainly enthusiastic adopters are more willing to switch to Mindset 2. It is teachers, not students, who can decide what type of education, might be offered to students. However, within the digital frame teachers and students are colleagues. The age where teachers go into class with a lesson plan, which was designed by teachers and policy makers is gradually ending. A new era of education has started where teaching/learning are blended digitally as seen in video and audio conferencing. For the teacher professional development in digital world to actually take shape, teachers are encouraged to be enthusiastic adapters of digital curriculum.

At the end, our children will grow to the apex of the digital world.

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