

Upskilling of Teachers for Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools: A Review

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Abstract

The paper examined up-skilling of teachers for job effectiveness in public secondary schools: a review. The paper adopted qualitative approach in which academic materials, from internet, textbooks, journals, magazines, were used to review literature on subject. The researcher suspected that teachers in public secondary schools are not adequately up-skilled for effective job performance of their roles. It identified up-skill as the process of acquiring new and relevant competencies needed today and in the near future. The paper raised dimensions of up-skill to include digital skills, analytics skills, and organizational transformation skills. Digital skills were identified as information and communication skills. While analytics skills focused on the ability to collect and analyze information, problem-solve, and make decisions within teaching scope. Organizational transformation skills viewed the ability of teaching staff to adapt to contemporary changes in the teaching and learning. The paper concluded that digital skills, analytical and organization transformation skills are required to foster job effectiveness in public secondary schools in River State. It suggested among others the need for training and retraining of teachers to face the teaching challenges of today and in the future.

Keywords: Up-skill, Teaching, Manpower, Job Effectiveness, Pubic Secondary Schools, Rivers State.

Introduction

The need for teaching staff to brace up with the contemporary and future school environment is paramount to retaining job effectiveness. There have been cases where teachers are not skilled in handling technologies or policies introduced by management to enhance teaching and learning in public secondary schools in Rivers State. A case in hand is moribund computer laboratories introduced by former Governor of Rivers State, Mr. Chibuike Amaechi. A lot of teachers or head teachers have not shown any level of competence to manage such teaching and learning facilities thereby forcing them into waste.

Upskilling deals with acquisition of contemporary skills as well as the skills required for the future in any professional area, in this case teaching. Up-skilling takes place in the areas of digital, analytical and organizational transformation skills (Nweke, 2022). These skills are required to improve the effectiveness of the teacher to deliver on his or her job role. For educators, up-skilling would mean, for example, peer learning walk-ins in classrooms, peer

discussion for conflict resolution with specific conflict resolution protocols, direct instruction videos reviewing and roundtables for tech in education

When school administrators adopt new technologies that automate various kinds of work, some jobs and tasks are eliminated while others emerge. Many new roles involve technologies that require considerable work to develop, implement, maintain, and change over time. Change in school culture is required and, as in organisational culture -related research, it means addressing underlying beliefs, artefacts (mission statements) and instructional behavioural elements of teaching.

Change on how you accept change is also another equally fundamental up-skilling aspect of teachers, parents and students.

Equally importantly, if not more, we need to support teachers in any potential mental health difficulties they face, in our rapidly changing world. Our times are similar to medieval times, as we are between an old world and moving to the A New one. As in all historical phases, our times are brimming with signs of things and concepts to be born. As we are waiting, we should also prepare with resilience, perseverance and future-related training, while passing the threshold of conviction that continuous research and training will make us, if not better educators, at least, prepared.

Conceptual Clarification

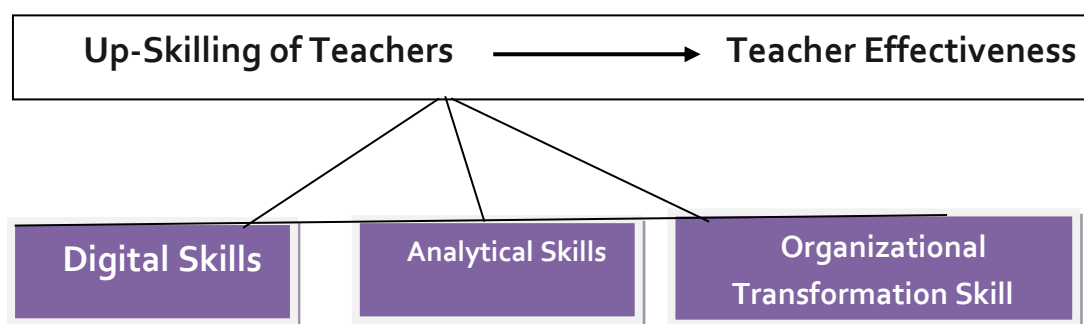


Fig. 1: Researchers' Guide, 2023

Concept of Up-skilling of Teachers

Teacher training and professional development are seen as central mechanisms for the improvement of teachers' content knowledge and their teaching skills and practices in order to meet high educational standards (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2015). Year after year, demands for quality in teaching and learning increase in higher education to meet academic standards, and this calls for attention to be directed to the provision of effective professional development on the part of teachers, researchers, educational institutions, and so forth. Up-skilling according to Richard (2012), is seen as preparation for teaching position or as preparation to take on a new teaching assignment or responsibility. Up-skilling involves understanding basic concepts and principles as prerequisite for applying them to teaching and the ability to demonstrate principles and practices in the

classroom. Teacher training also involves trying out new strategies in the classroom, usually with supervision, and monitoring and getting feedback from others on one's practice. The content of upskilling is usually determined by experts and is often available in standard training formats or through prescriptions in methodology books.

Teaching Effectiveness

Teaching effectiveness refers to the ability of a teacher to adapt to global trend and determination to attain school objective (Nweke, 2022). Today's teaching calls for shift from traditional rote style and lecture style of teaching to the type of teaching that fosters critical and reflective thinking and developing problem-solving skills in students. Teaching for critical thinking is claimed not to be widespread in classrooms (Nystrand and Gamoran, 2016). To meet the needs of students and the great demands in the profession of teaching, teachers have to be trained in the use of the different, old and new, approaches to teaching and assessment. That is to say, for educational reforms to take place and be of great benefit, effective professional development should also take place. On the basis of that, nowadays educational reforms urge teachers to foster collaboration debate and make students learn with reflection to help them develop the necessary cognitive skills and processes to meet the standards of learning and education. There are some strategies for teacher development and they often involve the following points : documenting different kinds of teaching practices; reflective analysis of teaching practices; examining beliefs, values, and principles; conversation with peers on one core issue; and collaborating with peers on classroom projects.

When discussing this point, some things may seem alright with regard to self-observation and critical reflection. The issue lies, in fact, in matters related to subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical expertise, and understanding of curriculum and materials. Personal reflection is necessary, but professional development should go beyond this. For example, Richards and Farrell (2005) maintains that professional development should "For example, include exploration of new trends and theories in language teaching; familiarization with developments in subject-matter knowledge such as pedagogical grammar, composition theory, or genre theory; and critical examination of the way schools and language programs are organized and managed." Teacher training and professional development programs are no longer concerned with teachers being exposed to one concept in a one-time workshop or even providing teachers with general basic knowledge about a given teaching methodology.

Teacher training and professional development should result in a fundamental change in teachers' teaching practices, and which, in turn, will lead to the increase of students' learning. A great deal of teachers have received, and may still receive, traditional, workshop based professional development despite the fact that research shows it as being ineffective. Darling-Hammond revealed that (2019), about 90 percent of teachers are claimed to have participated in a workshop-like style in training sessions during the whole school year. Despite being relevant, to some or great extent, the workshop presentations will not much

help changing teachers' teaching attitudes, beliefs and practices in classrooms and boosting the student achievement (Bush, 2018). According to Dufour and Eaker (2019), "schools have demonstrated time and again that it is much easier to initiate change than to sustain it to fruition." A continuous improvement plan is to sustain change to fruition (Zmunda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2014). Teaching training and professional development have to be rigorous and contain relevant content, strategies as well as organizational supports to ensure the good preparation and the career-long development of teachers. To be effective, this requires fostering the norm of continuous evaluation and improvement.

Digital Skills

Digital skills and common skills needed by people in the 21st century. The literature review allowed them to build a 21st century skills structure consisting of seven basic and 5 contextual digital skills, and to show the relationship between them. The authors included technical, information management, communication, cooperation, creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. The contextual skills group consisted of ethical awareness, cultural awareness, flexibility, self-reliance and continuous learning. The study found that the description of the common skills required in the 21st century is much more extensive than the description of digital skills. At the same time, the availability of common skills is not always supported by digital technologies (as opposed to digital skills). In their study, Hämäläinen (2015) considers the digital competence of teachers as a concept that includes digital skills, attitude to digital technologies and knowledge of the latter. Based on data from two international studies by PIAAC (International Adult Competency Assessment Program) and TALIS (International Study of Teaching and Learning) the authors studied how digital skills, knowledge and digital relationships relate to teachers, how they relate to personal and contextual factors (gender, age, subject, teaching, teaching).

Analytical Skills

An important aspect of teacher competence is the ability to analyze complex classroom situations, such as being able to identify a problem, figure out what caused the problem, understand students' incentives for behaving in particular ways, and also to take appropriate actions following this analysis. There are a number of studies, however, which report that beginner and novice teachers' analyses of classroom situations are typically simpler and more descriptive than are analyses done by more experienced teachers (Nweke, 2022).

This raises the question of how pre-service teachers can acquire this expertise, and a typical answer is that it requires extensive experience, while teacher education is usually seen to have little impact on such skills. On the other hand, arguments have been made about the possibility to feed forward this learning process, claiming that experiences need not necessarily be made by the students themselves, but can also be made vicariously, for instance through role plays or simulated situations (Elliott, 2018; Metcalf, Ronen Hammer, & Kahlich, 2018). Further, there is both theoretical and empirical support for the assumption

that students' learning can be enhanced by making expectations explicit to them (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Frederiksen & Collins, 2010; Sadler, 2013).

Organizational Transformational Skills

To meet the ever-changing economic, social, demographic and technological environment, there is a continuous need for schools to shape their culture, policy and practice to enhance student learning. Schools are seen as increasingly important players for the competitiveness of the countries as the education of its people is recognised to be an essential issue for the country's prosperity. School systems around the world strive to improve student achievement and promote the skills students need to participate effectively in national and global economies. To achieve this, many have been implementing schoolwide reforms focused on systemic school change (Karam, 2015). There is a growing understanding that teacher leadership embedded in various organisational contexts within school communities is as a critical element in the school improvement movement (Spillane et al., 2004; Kocolowski, 2010). The „leader-enriched“ school community is continually learning from operational practice, cooperation, exchange of experiences.

Teacher leaders, act for peer learning, promote institutional changes, create and encourage the shared learning culture. Discoveries with colleagues are taking place; professional development situations are enriching students' learning experiences and learning outcomes (Valuckienė et al., 2015). Such organisations benefit from better-informed decision making, shared ownership, and commitment to school goals (Matlach, 2015). Today, school development studies have begun to focus on teacher leadership through strengthening of continuous professional development of teachers (Demir, 2015). Professional Development Models were initiated to target the self-development of teachers and principals using new approaches, enhancing themselves by implementing new information, sharing experiences with colleagues, and reflecting all of these into their school development and strategies (Dogan and Altun, 2018).

Teacher training and professional development are gaining more attention and interest due to the educational reforms that happen, and will continue to happen, in many places around the world and which set ambitious and challenging goals in education (Borko, 2004). It is widely recognized, however, that teacher training and professional development are highly demanding processes. They are demanding because of the expectations that they will have great impact on the teachers' classroom practices. At all levels of education, teachers have concerns about their personal professional development. For this reason, they try to attend and participate in teacher training and professional development programs (Rodrigues, 2005).

Despite the great importance and need for teacher training and professional development programs in order to boost quality teaching and learning, it is usually claimed that the available programs, which is not the case of Algeria, seem to be fragmented, poorly aligned with curriculum and inadequate to meet the needs of teachers (Cohen & Hill, 2011). The

goals of in-service training programs, for instance, is usually not defined or poorly defined and there is no follow up to courses (OECD, 2008). Besides that, in many USA schools and educational systems, many programs of teacher training and professional development, which are given considerable amount of money, efforts and resources to be spent on in-service seminars, workshops, and other types of professional development and teacher training, seem to be intellectually superficial and lack established knowledge about what we know about effective teaching and the better teaching practices that teachers can implement in their classrooms (Ball & Cohen, 2018).

Challenges of Up-skilling in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State

Finance and budgeting Dynamic and progressive society needs to find solution of all those problems that may cause threat to its development or progress in any field of life. Educational development is considered as a forerunner and imperative factor to bring social change in the society (Singh, 2005). In this regard teachers are the important factor and driving force that can initiate betterment and improvement in society. For that purpose, teachers need sufficient guidance and training to equip themselves about the desired changes and the ways these changes can be executed. There are certain ways that are used to impart training but most important is continuous professional development, commonly known as in service training of teachers but there may be certain problems that not only struck the training programs but make it less advantageous. Efforts should be made to diagnose issues that may encounter professional training programs of in service teachers and appropriate solutions should also be searched to resolve them in order to make these training programs, powerful agent of change in the development of teachers as well as society.

Problem of Expert Trainers to Conduct Training Courses: a proficient, qualified and expert trainers are required who are aware of contemporary researches, theories; practices and other concerned educational developments so that the objectives of in service courses can be attained. Qualification and expertise of trainer demands a sufficient amount of knowledge and skills regarding teacher education (Dr. Yogesh Kumar Singh, 2005). Teacher training institutions should provide academic and professional opportunities for the teacher trainers to familiarize themselves not only with the technological and scientific changes but also with the social, philosophical, economical and cultural contexts. They need to be well acquainting with the innovations, latest trends and competencies so that they can effectively and efficiently discharge their responsibilities (Jagannath Mohanty, 2003). so through open merit selection highly competent staff can be selected. Expert trainers should be hired without the limitations of geographical boundaries, to ensure quality training.

Negligence of Quality in Professional Development: Upskilling courses specifically quality is used in dual perspectives. While planning any professional course it should be intended to meet the demands and requirements of customers as well as to considerate on

maximum perfection, excellence and high standards. Professional development programs are left behind in satisfying its customer (trainee teachers and students) needs because no situation analysis is conducted to assess the requirements of students, teachers and even community to understand what is to be taught to students, how teachers are expected to teach and in which areas society demands their children to be taught. Briefly to raise the quality of training programs, need assessment is essential (McCain & Mustard, 1999). In new National Education Policy 2009 great emphasis is given on improving the quality of teacher education with reference to teacher quality, curriculum and teaching, textbooks, assessment techniques, facilities and learning environment because one third of students' performance is based on teacher's pedagogy and leadership in class room (NEP, 2009).

Lack of Research Teacher Education: is considered as a system that includes input, process and output. So, it needs extensive research in order to identify that what resources are available, how program will be executed and what outcomes are supposed to be attained by this program. Lack of research may be because of ignorance about the appropriate methods of conducting research, in availability of funds and other required resources etc. (Dr. Yogesh Kumar Singh, 2005). These issues need to be given appropriate attention to be resolved so that professional training programs can be made more research based, beneficial, successful and advantageous.

Isolation of Teacher Education Programs: In service teacher education programs are intended to meet emerging need of educational environment in which students, teachers, learning process and community etc. are involved but sometimes these programs become isolated from educational environment and conducted just to carry out formality of organizing professional development courses. Needs of training are not searched and even efforts are not made to link up education being given in various educational institutions of all levels i.e school, college and university with community (ITA, 2004). To carry out professional programs successfully, it is very important to analyze the needs, that must be incorporated in training programs and to foresee the influence of these programs on the specific educational level at which training is being given and on the community also. Involvement of government and nongovernment institutions in professional development. Another issue regarding professional development of teachers is associated with the involvement of governmental or non-governmental institutions in imparting training to in service teachers. Both sectors see the efforts of each other with suspect and blame each other for undermining the quality of teacher education programs (ITA, 2004). There is an in dire need for the development of some uniform standard by the ministry of education and both sectors should be subjected to follow these standards so that this conflict can be eradicated and both sectors can be stimulated to contribute as much as possible within the circle of their limits.

Conclusion

Programs of teachers' up-skilling are of central importance in any educational institution, be it in the primary, middle school, high school or even the university level. Teachers at all levels need to be trained in their related fields and subject matter on a regular basis if they are to change their teaching beliefs, attitudes and daily life practices in classrooms. Such programs will help teachers sharpen their teaching skills and deepen and improve their knowledge in the subject matter they teach, and hence improve students' learning and schools education. For positive and beneficial change to take place, there should be an alignment between the curriculum and teachers' actual experiences in teaching. Another important point is related to the time that teachers spend on up-skilling and its efficiency. Teachers will benefit better from up-skilling that has as its main focus activities which focus on high-quality-subject-matter content. Up-skilling can be a great vehicle for teaching improvement and learning success if it is prepared and given by experts and on a regular basis to meet the needs of teachers and the demands of schools in Rivers State. There is an urgent need for teachers to be involved in programs for teachers' training and professional development. Teachers will always be learners and learning is an ongoing process and knowledge has no reachable limits.

Recommendations

Based on the reviewed literature, the following suggestions have been made:

1. Government proprietors of schools should dedicate adequate funding for the up-skilling programmes for teachers.
2. Teachers should be involved in policy formulation in schools to enable them participate fully in such policies.
3. Government should provide computers, train teachers in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

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