

# TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the potentiality of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Teacher Education for effective teaching and learning in English language. Information and Communication Technology, the modern technologies for storage, manipulation, and dissemination of information, include both hardware tools such as laptops, smart phones, projectors and software tools such as E-mail, Skype, Facebook and YouTube. These technological tools have brought a revolutionary movement in the field of education and information communication. Education which makes wide use of information communication has been highly influenced by the use of ICTs. In recent years, ICTs have been exploited in the teaching and learning of English language. Teaching and learning of the English language is one of the main concerns of many educational institutions because English is not only an international language and a Lingua Franca of the world's citizens, but it is also the storehouse of knowledge. The swift development of technology has had a considerable effect on teaching especially in English language classes and the rising procedure of using creative technology to help teachers' instruction and learning indicates the growing domination of technology in academic environment. In addition, teacher professional development significantly affects enhancing the teaching quality, especially the quality of educational activities within the class. This paper therefore attempts to explore the potentiality and role of technology-based teacher education and teacher professional development in English language.

**Key words:** Teacher Education, Professional Development, English Language, Teaching and Learning, Information and Communication Technology

### **Introduction**

The role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century educational set up cannot be overemphasized. Its relevance in the teaching and learning process in general is crucial and its application in the teaching and learning of English is imperative. This is essentially associated with the acquisition and proficiency of the language at different levels and for different purposes. The use of English Language in Nigeria cannot be compared with any other language. It is referred to as the official language in Nigeria and hence it is used as the medium of instruction at all levels of the Nation's education system from primary school through university. Without a credit pass in English Language, hardly will any student be admitted into tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The most concerned aspect of the educational development in the country today is the nose diving nature of the education system as seen in the publication of the terminal public examination results in recent times. The Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination conducted by West African Examination Council revealed that the dwindling performance of students in these examinations has remained unabated for quite sometimes now. The Joint Admission Examination result is also not better.

The reasons for the above scenario are numerous and the roles of teacher are pertinent in this review. The compulsory requirement of English Language for admission into higher school of learning has made it the most important subject. Hence, all search lights must be beamed at it, to improve its knowledge among learners. This can only be effectively done through the continuous training of English Language teachers especially on innovative teaching strategies among which the adequate knowledge of ICT is paramount. Teachers of English language occupy the central position in the English Language educational system in Nigeria in spite of the fact that English is the language of instruction and it is taught through integrated teaching of

all other subjects in school. The National Policy on Education in Nigeria admitted that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The policy consequently recommended some steps towards the enhancement of an effective and efficient teaching profession which includes training and recruitment of more teachers at both primary and secondary school levels (Adepoju, 2001; Adeyanju, 1991).

Information technology has played a big role in accelerating the movement of learning opportunities to all parts of the world, to learners of all cultures and nationalities. Information technology is widely recognized as a vital resource in economic, social and political development. In the present world, the skills of information technology are more than ever in great demand in all sectors including education, government, business and commerce (World Bank, 2014). Teachers have great influence on students through the learning process and can enhance pupils’ cognitive growth (Ogunsaju, 2009). As learning in the ICT age is no longer restricted to the four walls of the classroom, students with internet enabled mobile phones can do basic searches online and obtain information that may not be within the teacher’s reach at the point of disseminating the instructional content. Teachers must as a result exploit ICT with comparable or better technology to enliven their lessons, thereby facilitating better assimilation of the instructional content and keeping teachers abreast of current updates in their subject of specialization (Ogunsaju, 2009).

At present, language learning and education is considered as an attractive topic worldwide and, for decades, English education and learning has been experiencing numerous demanding situations and issues, though the vital function of English as Foreign Language (EFL) educators is indicated by designing an effective curriculum initiative that is beneficial to succeed when facing difficulties (Jiang et al, 2019). One of the most efficient methods to strengthen educators is assumed to be professional development, which is a lifelong effort, a method of being, and a view point on how individuals practise and such procedure in education means educator growth, and it is also mentioned that

stable learning is vital to educator growth (Wong, 2011). Essentially, professional development refers to teacher's education, adapting the method of learning and conveying their information into practice that learners can use to develop themselves (Avalos, 2011). Many policy-makers, practitioners, and scholars in the education realm are unanimous that educator professional development will truly enhance learning outcomes of learners (Tajeddin and Rezanejad, 2019). The quality of teacher professional development is turning into a highly important academic matter, as educators come across increasing investigation and stress to assist learners to reach higher degrees.

Professional development is crucial in assuring educators to maintain developments in complete learner fulfilment criteria, learn new education approaches within the content domains, discover ways to learn educational modern technologies for education and learning in the best way, and making their education adaptive to the changing school setting and an increasingly different learner population (Lawless and Pellegrino, 2007). The progress of technology has provided teachers with extensive access to learning and professional development without having time and space boundaries.

Undeniably, because of the advent of technology, the English language education method has been substantially modified. Technology provides many advantages such as making education fascinating and more effective regarding improvements. Technology has become a part of our normal life; therefore, it turns to reconsider the notion of merging technology into the educational programme and focusing on its integration into education to help the learning procedure. That is, technology turns into an essential component of the learning experience and an important issue for educators, from the start of making the learning experience ready to the process of learning and instruction (Altun and Khurshid Ahmad, 2021).

Regarding preparation of the learners for the present digital technology, educators are considered as the main actors in the use of technology in classes every day, that is, due to its capability in presenting a lively and proactive education-learning setting.

## **Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Every human being by nature is a teacher. Teaching takes place once an activity, formal or informal leads to change in an experience or behaviour in someone else from unknown to known. The traditional African society prior to the advent of colonialism had forms of teaching and learning system in which the parent or elders inculcated societal norms and values on the younger generation or to one another. The system was moralistic, simple, and pragmatic. The traditional African teaching process depended on everyday experiences using tangible and intangible materials found in the environment such as artefacts, crafts, natural resources, festivals, folklores, arts, idioms etc.; to aid teaching and learning, which is still in use today to preserve and transfer out cultural heritage even though it was informal. Today, education vis-à-vis teaching has taken a new dimension as some persons are versed with the right and responsibilities to carry out teaching functions. Otherwise called a teacher, consequently, such individual must pass through some specific and specialized training through designated platforms and specialized programmes and process called Teacher Education.

In tandem with the above and given the specialized teacher's roles in the development process of an individual and the nation; it is observed that the Federal Government of Nigeria presently places emphasis on the teaching profession as enshrined in the National Policy on Education which states that amongst the goals of teacher education, is to produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system, provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Corroborating the above position, Abba (1992) as cited in Ukoha (1999) opine that if education has to do with teaching, curriculum and setting, then teacher education has to do with creating an enabling environment so that someone can impart through different ways, appreciate knowledge and skills to someone who is willing to be a teacher, or someone who is already a teacher but

wishes to enhance his/her capacity in discharging those teaching functions effectively.

Interestingly, this paper avers that the essence of teacher education is to inculcate in a would-be teacher, acceptable attitudinal, behavioural, knowledge, values and skills approvable by educational and socio-political policy makers and implementers. The way to train teachers with these cherished qualities, according to Ukoha (1999), is through professional teacher training that will result in an educated person who possesses a firm grounding of chosen subject-matter. Besides these attributes as posited above, it is expedient that teacher education should also produce individuals who can see, analyse, and interpret the needs and aspirations of citizens and the learners particularly in the classroom.

### **The Need for Teacher Education**

Teacher education is policy and procedure designated to equip teachers with the knowledge, attributes, behaviour and skills they require to perform their task effectively in the classroom, school, local and wider society; although, ideally, it should be conceived of and organized as a seamless continuing teacher education. This is often divided into three stages:

1. Initial teacher training (teacher-candidate).
2. Induction (the process of providing training and support during the first year of teaching a particular school).
3. Teacher development or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (an intensive process for practicing teachers).

Training teachers is necessary in the 21<sup>st</sup> century mainly because of the fact that current generation students don't comprehend traditional teaching methods. Students of today cannot be taught with the methods of yesterday. Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need personalization in education. Each student is unique in myriad ways including in the way they think, analyse, understand and go about academics. It is therefore important for our existing system to bring in this change.

Training teachers to know how to view their students as unique individuals with different learning styles is the game changer. Once teachers understand this and know how to cater to the various learning styles, they will positively impact hundreds and thousands of students.

Teacher education is more critical now than ever because teachers today are struggling with identifying and filling the learning gaps in students to bring them up to grade level. Plus, they need to complete the current year's syllabus as well. If there were ever a mammoth task, it is this. Without the right knowledge, tools and skills, teachers cannot be reasonably expected to navigate these challenges on their own.

### **Teacher Professional Development in English Language**

Professional development can be described as the enhancement of teachers' skills, knowledge, and ability in improvising their teaching methodologies to serve the students better. It is a long-term learning process, which is crucial in keeping abreast with the modern changes and developments in the teaching world.

English language has now become a vital part of our daily life and to keep up with the world around us, teachers especially need to keep themselves updated with the latest trends, skills and information which is essential for their professional growth. As English is a lingua franca, English language teaching therefore has an undeniable global significance. EFL teachers have to continuously keep themselves apprised of the development and changes in their profession. And to do so, they have to take part in professional development. Equally, they have to assess and reconsider their old teaching practices and change them to match the current standards of teaching. In an EFL classroom, teachers' professional progress plays a crucial role in the overall development of the students. But the rapid reforms in educational systems compel teachers to keep learning and developing, and it is only possible through continuous professional development. Teachers ought to be ready to bring changes in their teaching methodologies to influence students' learning positively. So, without a scintilla of doubt,

it is clear that teacher training is imperative for both new and experienced teachers.

More importantly, the professional development of teachers is a component of any educational system concerned with preparing and educating teachers to acquire the necessary competencies and abilities in teaching to improve the quality of instructors in their classrooms (Afe, 1995). Professional development is an intentional, continuous and systematic procedure and activities intended to boost educators' professional knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, so that they may in turn increase students learning (Collins and O'Brien, 2003). Instructors' ongoing professional development is a long-term professional development process that is important in a dynamic society's need for competent, experienced, and qualified teachers. As a result, professional development can be seen as a method for developing proficiencies for fulfilling changing professional needs through constant exposure to professional update programmes.

English Language teachers have witnessed immense changes in education with the introduction of new processes and techniques and these changes include knowledge, ideas, perspectives, opinion, and teaching practices (Yurtsever, 2013). Professional development programmes arranged by educational institutions not only help the teacher's development but also benefit the employer. For example, enrolling teachers in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes that provide training on ICT will:

- i. help the teachers understand the use of digital media in teaching due to quality education;
- ii. increase the institute's admission due to quality education.

Therefore, institutions must provide their teachers with CPD programmes to reform the personalities of the teachers and improvise their teaching methodologies. Although CPD has been considered in every field but within the English language teaching field, it is regarded as a fundamental factor to support professional development with participating in workshops, conferences, on service training courses,



utilizing innovative technologies such as online discussions and wikis, etc. (Morris, 2010).

In addition, effective professional development programmes can enhance teachers' knowledge and proficiencies to improve students' learning effectively. Noor Mohammadi (2014), stated that teachers involved in the high-quality professional development programmes eventually develop in knowledge and on pedagogical activities, which eventually affects students' progress and success.

### **Teacher Education and Professional Development in English Language Teaching and Learning through ICT**

Teaching and learning of the English language is one of the main concerns of many educational institutions because English is not only an international language and a lingua franca of the world's citizens, but it is also the storehouse of knowledge (Bhattarai, 1995; Harmer, 2007). Therefore, attempts have been made to enhance English Language Teaching (ELT) and make it more advanced. Many research scholars (Acevedo, 2016; Ince, 2014; Liu, 2012) in their research studies have concluded that English Language Teaching and Learning (ELTAL) is effective and more successful with the integration of ICTs.

According to Adams and Brindley (2007), English is a subject ready to think about new ways of constructing reading and writing and about the pedagogical value of collective work and the possibilities afforded by the renaissance of learning made possible through ICT. Likewise, Rank et al (2011), discuss that the Web 2.0 application can be exploited to the advantages of the students learning English language and literature which create several possibilities of learning opportunities such as exploring and investigating, composing and creating, reflecting and evaluating, presenting and performing and communicating and collaborating. ICTs, the digital technologies, are powerful educational tools, and their use has a significant role in the transfiguration of the pedagogy of teaching and learning (Ludvigsen & Morch, 2010). Angeli et al (2015) view that a good combination of

technology and pedagogy is very important to ensure that the learners are able to take advantage of technology inclusion for the opportunities of learning integrated skills of language. According to Davis (2007), the incorporation of the technology into English classroom can help achieve:

1. cognitive gain by providing visual images;
2. motivational gain by providing fun, and
3. interactional gain by providing convenience sharing.

ICTs provide opportunities for exploring the communicative power of the English learner by engaging them in exploring literary texts and several other interactive activities in existing ways (Richards, 2007). Likewise, computer-based activities enhance interaction and collaboration and provide unique opportunities for the development of the learner's spoken and written language capabilities (Andrew, 2007). A variety of technology-enhanced gadgets can create an interactive learning environment to develop learners' autonomy and meaningful learning, which provides a huge amount of exposure to language (Acevedo, 2016). The spreading innovations of ICTs such as personal computers, internet, mobile phones, and many other ICT tools, have caused a 'paradigm shift' in teaching and learning of all subjects, and the traditional model of teaching and learning has been replaced by transformed pedagogy (Juceviciene, 2008). A paradigm shift in education is a change in the concept and procedures of teaching and learning. For example, the activity of encouraging learners for creative learning instead of role learning is a good example of transformed pedagogy. Likewise, different types of paradigm shifts such as:

4. a shift from behaviourism/habit formation-based teaching;
5. a shift from teacher-centred approach to learner-centred approach, and
6. a shift from psychometric-structuralist testing, to psycholinguistics-sociolinguistic testing, are been practiced in the field of education (Li, et al; 2012).

Consequently, various language learning online/offline software, language learning platforms, and methodological innovations like Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) have made language learning easier and more effective (Dina & Ciomai, 2013). All these advancements that improve the quality of education make wide exploitation of CITs.

In the twenty-first century, most English language teachers and learners use technology (Healey, 2018) and teachers' pedagogical aptitudes for technology are keys to the effective integration of technology into classrooms (Hubbard, 2018; Stockwell, 2018). Therefore, teachers take central roles as stakeholders and practitioners in mediating this development for personal and professional reasons (Son, 2018; Stockwell, 2018). So, teachers engage with numerous modes of continuing professional development in technology tools and skills to improve their teaching believing that these actions can enhance student-centred learning and inspire transformation for both teachers and students (Kessler and Hubbanrd, 2018; Wang et al; 2020). Even though educational systems throughout the world encourage various professional development modes and activities, such as attending conferences, workshops and conducting action research, teachers still hesitate to adopt technologies and lack confidence in using technology effectively in English language teaching (Kessler, 2018).

As in the other part of the world, technology has become an integral part of learning and teaching and technology use continues to evolve as English Language teachers both aspire and struggle to embrace it (Heatley, 2018). Numerous studies have stated the benefits of integrating technology for second language acquisition (e.g. interactivity, collaboration, authentic materials, independent learning) (Cardenas Claros & Oyanede. 2015; Chapelle, 2012; Stockwell, 2012). English language teaching and digital pedagogy take many forms, ranging from drills and practice of certain language skills, such as reading and writing, to using Web 2.0, augmented reality, and virtual reality to construct knowledge. Today's generation of learners has

grown up surrounded by technology and they expect innovative tools and conceptual methods from their teachers.

Accordingly, teachers use a plethora of technology tools and online environments to adapt, personalize and enhance the students' learning experience and improve learning outcomes. Digital pedagogy is thus a vital component of teaching: teachers must meet this challenge and move beyond traditional pedagogical approaches and methods, as students access learning materials on their smart devices, and classrooms have interactive whiteboards, Mobile Computers on Wheels (MoCoWs) and Apple TVs. English language teachers' usage of technology to its fullest potential largely depends upon their ability to exploit it (Cabanata, 2003). Accordingly, it is necessary to examine the current understanding of professional development to establish how current delivery methods are effective and consistent with evolving notions of teaching.

In terms of professional development modes, informal collaboration remains a driving force behind much of the professional development in which teachers productively engage and which they find useful in enhancing their teaching and learning practice. In these settings, teachers appear more comfortable with sharing and learning among equals. One such setting is informal mentoring, where the mentee and mentor can support and encourage each other while transforming their teaching practice in a mutually supportive network (Kohnke, 2020). This setting is a fruitful avenue to explore, as it appears to help teachers gain better in insights into how to incorporate pedagogy around English language teaching and technology in education which could help inform teachers' practice.

## **Conclusion**

ICT's are found to contribute several benefits to English language teaching and learning in higher institutions. The technologies are useful for the teachers for collecting teaching-learning resources, preparing and presenting the lessons, motivating the students, making more frequent interactions, and providing the students with feedback.

Likewise, ICTs are helpful for the students for collecting learning resources, making interactions and collaborations, increasing exposure to English, and developing their learning autonomy.

Teacher professional development is a critical component in helping teachers to successfully bridge the gap between existing pedagogy and newly required pedagogy in a world where Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has become common parlance in conversations about educational change and innovations. The UNESCO and other organizations worldwide purport that ICT holds the potential to revolutionize students' skills and competencies and such there is an ubiquitous demand for teacher professional development in the use of ICT, however educational transformation can only happen when policy makers and ICT instructional designers are able to make informal decisions on how to develop and implement teacher professional development in the use of ICT to achieve (this goal) effective teaching and learning of English language.

## **Recommendations**

1. Effective professional development cannot be optimized without communication between the teacher and instructions. Administrators therefore need to allow teachers to become more actively involved in deciding their pedagogic goals and how best to achieve them through the effective use of ICT so that the transfer of skills and knowledge around pedagogical, English language teaching and technology in education improves.
2. Transformation begins as an internal process, therefore a shift from a technologically driven design to a more pedagogical design of ICT teacher professional development is urgently needed.
3. Ministry of Education (the Government) should provide teachers with a wide variety of professional development courses that enable them to incorporate the use of ICTs in their daily teaching practice. This is to strengthen the pedagogical knowledge of ICT. Apparently

- teachers use those tools for their personal purposes but they do not know how to implement them in their foreign language classroom.
4. Schools should provide teachers with the tools and connectivity for the implementation of ICT, not only for classroom use but also to take part in research projects, communities of knowledge etc.
  5. Teachers should be open to explore the new pedagogical routes that ICT provide in order to improve students' learning opportunities. Technology offers an array of applications that can facilitate the teaching-learning processes and it is by becoming familiar with it that teachers can make informal decisions about its application. Technology, per se, will not replace teachers as they are essential to guide students' processes.

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