



## **MODERN TRENDS IN CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SECTOR**

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**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic brings with it disruptions in earlier established methods of undertaking task and rendering services, the educational sector in Nigeria being no exception. This disruption requires new methods for continuous professional development of teachers. This theoretical paper focused on the importance of new methods of continuous professional development of teaching staff in Nigeria's school system in the face of the global challenges which affects the educational sector like every other sector. The importance of continuous professional development was underscored. Continuous Professional Development was viewed as a means where teaching professionals keep their knowledge and skills current so that they can deliver the high quality of service that safeguards the public and meets the expectations of customers (students), and the requirements of their profession. The paper reiterated the fact that the unanticipated challenges of the COVID -19, IDPs, etc. has put the teaching staff in the position of being relevant to offer professional services to whom, and where it is needed. The advantages of the technological age, aided by advances in Information and Communication can be taken advantage of, for teaching professionals to add to their knowledge current trends, alongside the traditional physical classroom instruction methods.

**Keywords:** Modern Trends, Continuous Professional Development, Nigerian Educational Sector

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the educational sector, the teacher is a critical resource for the effective implementation and realization of educational policy and objectives at the practical level of the classroom; who is responsible for translating national policies, aims and objectives, desirable knowledge, skills, values, and competencies into practical terms for the development of the society; they are critical inputs of an educational system (Anyaoagu, 2017, Unachukwu and Nwosu, 2014; Okeke 2004 in Anyaoagu, 2017). The 2022 theme of the World Teacher's Day in Nigeria was "The Transformation of Education begin with Teachers". The importance of teacher training and continuous professional development programmes in the form of in-service trainings, workshops, seminars and conferences have over the years been advocated to keep teachers up to date and relevant. Asawo (2021) posited that staff development programmes, which could be formal or informal helps staff members improve on their responsibilities, develop required skills and competencies which are needed to accomplish goals, for personal and professional growth, and for preparation for advancement. It is frequently argued that professional development has the potential to empower academics with the necessary pedagogical skills for them to cope with educational challenges encountered. Flippo (1976) opined that development is concerned with the increase in skill through training, which is necessary for proper job performance, and considers it of great importance in the organization due to changes in technology, realignment of jobs, and the increasing complexity of the task of management.

Today, the reality of the unanticipated COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown the world over places the demand of a redirection of continuous professional development programmes for teachers to accommodate modern trends with the aid of technological advancements. Furthermore, in order to meet the needs of an evolving audience in this ever changing world of education, teachers need to grasp training and development opportunities with much consciousness. With the rapid developments in technology which affect the way students learn, and the way teachers teach, modern teachers need to be competent in not only basic skills, but all round growth.

**Demir (2020) reiterated that E-learning** has become a very important topic with [Covid-19](#). Educational activities in many countries stopped, and hundreds or even thousands of companies [started working remotely](#). This situation made education impossible with traditional methods. Also, the Pandemic has shown the inadequate use of technology in education, stating that universities and schools can use it to support classical learning in some cases, instead of just classical learning. E-line learning is an excellent way for educational institutions that want to teach/learn new things without the need for a physical space.

It is in this light that this paper seeks to explore modern trends in training and development programmes for teachers especially through the on-line learning platforms (E-Learning) aided by information and communication technology to enable them fit into the global space.

## **CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

### **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in Education**

In its broadest sense, the term CPD is used to describe the learning activities professionals engage in to develop and enhance their abilities. It is a holistic approach for enhancing professional skills and proficiency throughout a professional career. Therefore, CPD can be said to be the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional lives, which enables learning to become conscious and proactive; it doesn't just suggest on the job training, but also includes any form of external education which can help improve the skills and knowledge of professionals.

Professional development is a wide range of specialized training, formal education or advanced professional learning aimed at helping the receiver improve his professional skills, knowledge and competencies. According to Mehta (2019), Continuous professional development refers to the process of training and developing professional knowledge and skills through independent, participation-based or interactive learning.

In relation to education, Eze and Emmanuel in Ossai and Isagua (2017) refers to professional development as a variety of activities, both formal and informal, designed for personal and professional growth of teachers and administrators, to include personal development, continuing education, in-service education, peer collaboration (communities of practice), mentoring, attending conferences, paper publication, etc. Furthermore, the concept is largely viewed to be a systematic, initial and continuous coherent process of educating teachers in accordance with professional competency, standards and framework.

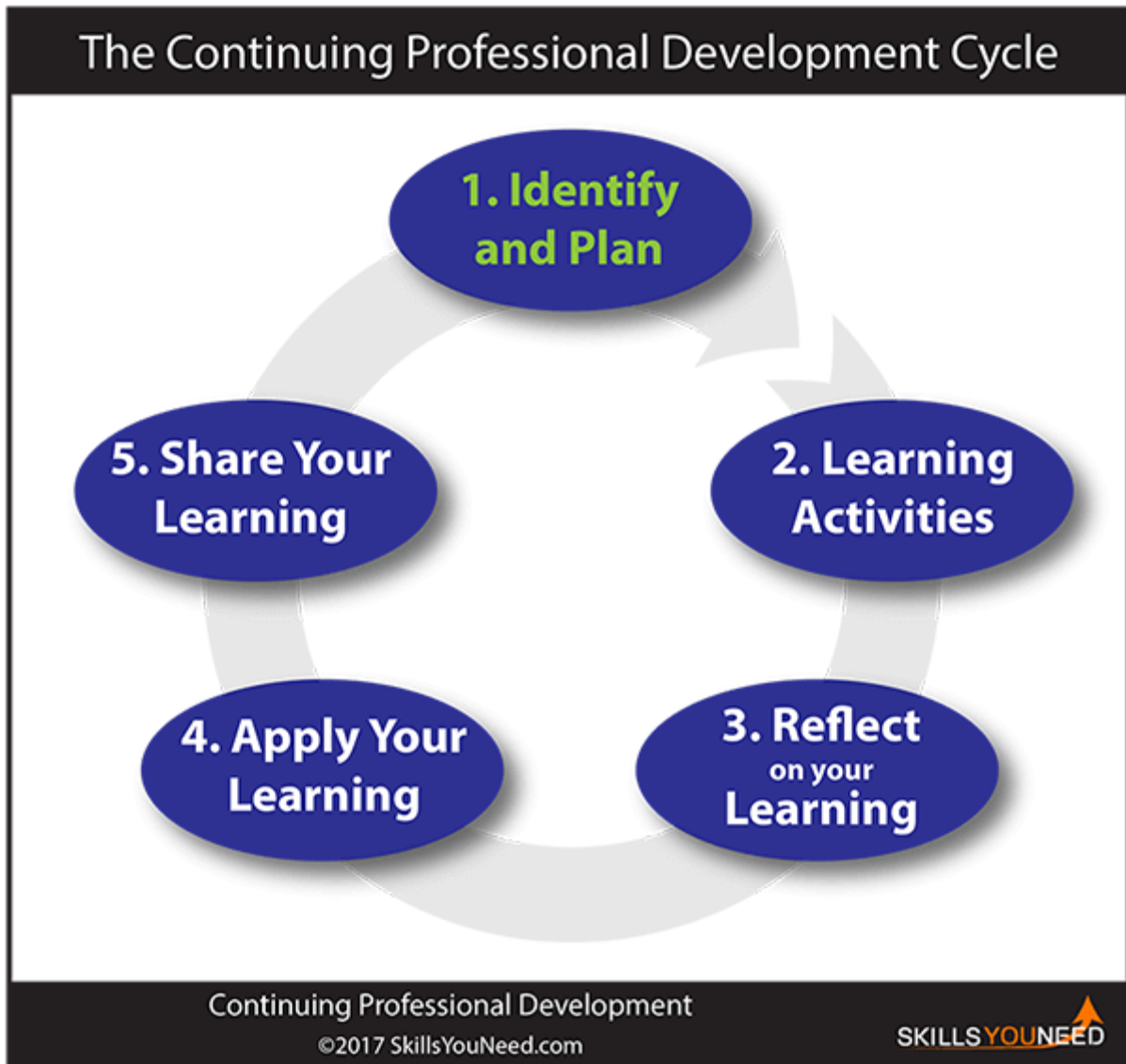
McGill (2013) opined that what ultimately attracts the teacher to the profession is the innate disposition to impart knowledge, inspire and to continue to learn for themselves, stating that teachers, young and old, new and established should be given the time to develop, to share and to train in order to meet the needs of an evolving audience. Thus, in this ever changing world of education, teachers need to grasp training opportunities with both hands. Gordon and Partington (1996) in Fielden (1998) stated that CPD is an essential rather than a desirable objective, an obligation rather than an option - both a professional expectation and duty and a responsibility that institutions have for their staff. This is succinctly captured by Kloosterman (2014) that at its core, CPD is a personal responsibility of professionals to keep their knowledge and skills current so that they can deliver the high quality of service that safeguards the public and meets the expectations of customers and the requirements of their profession. It requires learning to earn or maintain professional credentials from short courses to higher degrees, such as academic degrees to formal work courses, attending seminars, conferences and informal learning opportunities situated in practice which helps to grow professional networks and

contacts.

Maclaran (2005) is of the view that in this era of widening diversity and public accountability, there is an overdue acceptance to provide teaching staff with frameworks for professional development in the area of teaching and practice. Teachers' professional development involves ensuring that the responsibility for delivering effective services and facilitating ongoing growth and development among practitioners is transferred from a formal trainer (coach, consultant, group facilitator) to individuals and groups of professionals. Imparting an ethics of responsibility for sustaining quality and ongoing growth and learning in practitioners first involves efforts to help individuals develop the skills and dispositions for self-regulated professional growth. Initially, professional development programs are expected to be an "outside-in" process, wherein the information necessary for behaviour change or professional growth comes from external authorities, imparted through lectures, readings, demonstrations, and verbal advice from peers, supervisors, coaches, or consultants. Later, however, professional development ideally progresses to becoming an "inside-out" process in which individuals retain responsibility to direct their own ongoing growth and improvement through continued study of current and best practices and reflective personal goal setting in collaboration with respected colleagues. These assertions are further buttressed by Kloosterman (2014) who stated that continuing professional development should be an ongoing process which continues throughout a professional's career due to its importance of ensuring that staff members continue to be competent in their profession, and highlighted among others the following benefits:

- CPD ensures your capabilities keep pace with the current standards of others in the same field.
- CPD ensures that you maintain and enhance the knowledge and skills you need to deliver a professional service to your customers, clients and the community.
- CPD ensures that you and your knowledge stay relevant and up to date. You are more aware of the changing trends and directions in your profession. The pace of change is probably faster than it's ever been – and this is a feature of the new normal that we live and work in. If you stand still you will get left behind, as the currency of your knowledge and skills becomes outdated.
- CPD helps you continue to make a meaningful contribution to your team. You become more effective in the workplace. This assists you to advance in your career and move into new positions where you can lead, manage, influence, coach and mentor others.
- CPD helps you to stay interested and interesting. Experience is a great teacher, but it does mean that we tend to do what we have done before. Focused CPD opens you up to new possibilities, new knowledge and new skill areas.
- CPD can deliver a deeper understanding of what it means to be a professional, along with a greater appreciation of the implications and impacts of your work.
- CPD helps advance the body of knowledge and technology within your profession
- CPD can lead to increased public confidence in individual professionals and their profession as a whole

Continuing professional development is an ongoing process, as well as a cycle. Professionals are likely to continue to learn throughout their life. To a large extent, professional development addresses the process of skills acquisition by specifying the steps through which a learner moves from novice to expert understandings of the professional practice. The adoption of new professional practices is often acknowledged as a process that moves through at least three stages: (a) awareness of new strategies that are expected to achieve important outcomes; (b) application of these strategies, at first in a somewhat awkward fashion; and (c) refinement of these skills so that they are implemented automatically and in a practiced, masterly manner as depicted below:



Source: SkillsYouNeed.com (2017)

Moore (2013) in Slowey, Kozina and Tan (2014) argue that professional development for academics in higher education lies at the heart of teaching and learning enhancement and that it is crucial for teachers in higher education to reflect on, and update their practice, monitor and develop their own professional impact, and draw on evidence and research in order to inform their practice. In the view of Moore (2013) in Slowey, Kozina and Tan 2014:

The time we can commit to accredited or non-accredited professional development activity is not always a given, but it is profoundly important. Without professional development support, teaching can be an isolating activity. It has always been my experience that teachers benefit hugely when they feel part of a network of practitioners and when they are actively connected to experts, research, know-how and development opportunities. Such opportunities serve to enhance their practice, develop their careers and enrich the experience of their students (pp. 8-9)

The huge expansion in student enrolments over the last decade in tertiary institutions into both undergraduate and post-graduate programmes calls for increased numbers of academic staff, with the requisite quality and level of training, to provide quality instruction and training for the students. Expansion in the number of staff without attention to their professional development does not augur well for the future (Tetty, 2010). Thus, training and good quality development should be available to all (McGill, 2013).

### **Modern Trends in CPD in Education**

With the rapid developments in technology which affect the way students learn, and the way teachers teach, modern teachers need to be competent in not only basic skills, but all round growth. The need for teachers to adjust, regularly renew their direction and prepare for the ever changing work environment of the present and the future was advocated by Isiozor (2014) in Bua (2020). In recent times, one can opine that every effort to include, and be progressive in the use of **ICT facilities and E- Learning** options constitute modern trends in the development efforts of teaching staff at all levels in the education sector. Especially with the outbreak of the COVID-19 which necessitated that physical contacts between students and teachers are greatly minimized, it became imperative that development efforts are geared towards the use of technology for seamless instruction. However, the numerous challenges facing the acquisition, maintenance, sustainability and the unpreparedness on the part of the teachers warrants these modern trends be consciously paid attention to, for the continuous professional development of staff members,

In the ongoing professional development of teachers, Porta in Bua (2020) opined that ICT can be used to extend access to educational delivery techniques and to facilitate education related data collection and processing efforts in ways not previously possible. With the introduction of new technologies into the educational system, professional development in ICT is aimed at equipping the teaching staff not just with basic ICT skills, but with a consciousness to integrate technology into teaching subjects and practices. Bua (2020) emphasized that Information and Communication Technology has given rise to new modes of organizing the educational environment, with new concepts in the teaching process as well as the remodeling of the roles played by the participants in the educational process.

In recent times, the integration of ICT skills in teacher professional development has become a must to help them present and distribute instructions through the web environment. Ossai and Isagua (2017) categorized ICT facilities useful for the present day teacher to include:

- Information Technology which largely uses computers
- Telecommunication Technologies which include mobile telephones and broadcasting of radio and television through the satellite
- Networking Technologies to include the internet, satellite communication, and all other forms of communication gadgets.

Information and communication gadgets are powerful tools which educators need to change and reform the processes of pedagogy and the quality of education. Thus, they need to learn, unlearn and relearn the art of using these gadgets as part of their continuous professional development, to enable them work in the undeniable technological work environment. Kienengyere in Bua (2020) listed the following as ICT infrastructures used by educational institutions: Interactive boards, Modern computer equipment, Video and sound gadgets, Mobile phones, Cable television, PowerPoint, Animations, Finding information on internet. Internet and email for communication, Learning platforms, Dissemination of information, Contacts with other universities, Use of laptops by lecturers, Video conferencing facilities on instructional activities in secondary schools, Projector facilities on lesson delivery in secondary schools and E- learning facilities such as Coursera, edX, YouTube, Lynda, Udemy, Allison, Khan Academy, MIT open courseware, Open culture, Open Yale courses, Web-based learning, Computer-based training, CD-ROM based training, Webinars, Virtual classroom, Mobile learning, Video-based learning, Custom E-learning, Off-the shelf eLearning, etc. These variety of infrastructure require regular upgrade in skills and knowledge by those who should use them.

### **The Concept of E-Learning**

E-learning is a system based on formalized teaching with the aid of electronic resources. While teaching can take place in and out of formal classroom settings, the use of computers and the Internet forms the major component of E-learning. Markus in Nwokoro (2017) defined E-learning as a learning process created by interaction with digitally delivered content, network based services and tutoring support. E-learning can also be referred to as a network enabled transfer of skills and knowledge, and the delivery of education is made to a large number of

recipients at the same or different times. Demir (2020) defined E-learning, also called **online learning, electronic learning or distance education**, as a learning model that uses technological infrastructure such as computers and the internet to carry out learning-teaching activities. It is a system that includes concepts such as **technology-based learning, computer-based learning, internet-based learning**, and [mobile learning](#).

With the introduction and massive use of computers, coupled the world getting hooked to smartphones, tablets, etc, these devices now have an important place in the classrooms for learning. Books are gradually getting replaced by electronic educational materials like optical discs or pen drives. Knowledge can also be shared via the Internet, which can be accessed anywhere, anytime. Online learning is an excellent way for institutions and organizations that want to teach/learn new things without the need for a physical space. Universities and schools can use it to support traditional professional development opportunities. Schools and staff members who use E-learning technologies are no doubt a step ahead of those which still have the traditional approach towards learning. While it is still important to take forward the concept of non-electronic teaching with the help of books and lectures, the importance and effectiveness of technology-based learning cannot be taken lightly or ignored completely.

Various sectors, including agriculture, medicine, education, services, business, and government setups are adapting to the concept of E-learning which significantly helps in the progress of a nation. The advantages of E-Learning, especially in the educational sector cannot be overemphasized, and have been identified by Demir (2020) to include, but not limited to the fact that students want personalized content where and when they need it because they are mostly on the go, they prefer to be able to access content anytime and anywhere, E-learning/online learning provides an education process independent of distances, common teaching materials with video and audio materials and other technological methods that can be used to understand the subject matter, supports people to learn independently of time and places and the opportunity to interact with others through online discussion boards and chats. The foregoing can be summarized as having E-Learning platforms to making teaching and learning to be: Having fun, there is no time and space limitation, results can be measured, effective, supports traditional education, efficient and saves money.

Ololube (2022) pointed out that teachers in this era should be creative and innovative in tandem with this age of globalization and digitalization, with the need to possessing sound knowledge of current reality of Information and Communication Technology. No doubt continuous professional development efforts in the educational sector in Nigeria, whether by the government, employers of labour or individual efforts of the teaching staff in the area of E-Learning would have placed them at par with their contemporaries, and put in them the zeal to brace up to meet the demands of modern teaching and learning.

## **CONCLUSION**

The reality of technological advancement all over the world has placed on the educational sector the need to develop its practices, especially in the continuous professional development of manpower in the face of ever-changing circumstance and unpredictable outcomes as evidenced by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and other predicted viruses and diseases. The teacher who is the hallmark of every educational system responsible for interpreting and implementing educational curriculum should be continuously developed with modern trends to brace up to the realities of the times. This paper reiterated the fact that the traditional development practices of teachers over time has been beneficial, but current development efforts should include modern trends and realities.

## **Suggestions**

From the foregoing, the following suggestions are made to ensure that the teachers responsible for implementing educational policies in the areas of instruction as it concerns their continuous professional development is not undermined:

1. There should be a conscious positioning of the manpower to receiving continuous professional development opportunities
2. These opportunities should be geared towards technological grooming and advancements.
3. Educational stakeholders at all levels should be conscious of this all important contemporary global need.

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