

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to examine the challenges and prospects of continuous professional development (CPD) for secondary school teachers in Adamawa State, Nigeria. CPD remains a critical mechanism for enhancing teacher quality, improving instructional delivery, and strengthening educational outcomes. This paper investigates the current state of CPD initiatives in Adamawa State, drawing on national policy frameworks and contemporary educational reform priorities. The analysis reveals that although CPD is recognized as the foundation for effective curriculum implementation and improved student learning, its implementation in the state is hindered by inadequate government commitment, insufficient funding, limited access to training facilities, and low exposure to modern pedagogical and digital tools. These constraints undermine teachers' professional growth and weaken classroom effectiveness. The paper argues that sustainable investment, stronger policy execution, and integration of ICT-driven training models are essential to reposition CPD for greater impact. Recommendations are proposed for developing a coherent, long-term CPD strategy capable of elevating teacher competencies, enhancing school performance, and promoting educational development in Adamawa State.

Introduction

Education is universally recognized as the most potent instrument for social, economic, and technological advancement. It serves as the bedrock of national development and the foundation upon which all other sectors depend. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) asserts that “no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers,” underscoring the central role teachers play in the implementation of educational policies and programmes. As key agents of change and nation-building, teachers must continuously update their knowledge, skills, and professional competence to meet the growing and dynamic demands of contemporary education.

Continuous professional development (CPD) has therefore become an essential component of teacher education and instructional improvement. CPD refers to a lifelong, structured, and reflective process through which teachers engage in ongoing learning activities aimed at enhancing their pedagogical practices, deepening content knowledge, and adapting to emerging innovations within the educational landscape. In the Nigerian context, CPD is recognized as a strategic mechanism for maintaining teaching quality and raising educational standards across various levels of schooling.

In Adamawa State, the secondary education sector faces significant challenges, including inadequate teacher preparation, limited professional development opportunities, and insufficient educational infrastructure. Despite national policy commitments and efforts by educational institutions, many secondary school teachers still lack consistent access to meaningful CPD programmes that can support their professional growth. The rapid expansion of schools, increasing student enrolment, and evolving curriculum demands further

highlight the urgent need for well-supported and continually developing teachers. Although institutions such as the Federal College of Education (FCE) and the Faculty of Education at Modibbo Adamu University contribute to teacher training and retraining, systemic gaps in CPD provision remain evident.

The importance of CPD in secondary schools extends beyond improving instructional delivery; it also plays a vital role in strengthening teacher motivation, professionalism, and career progression. As noted by Ojo, A.O. (2024), without adequately developed and well-supported teachers, achieving meaningful educational transformation becomes unattainable. Thus, a sustained focus on continuous professional development is indispensable for enhancing teacher capacity, improving student learning outcomes, and fulfilling broader educational reform goals in Adamawa State and Nigeria as a whole.

Concept of Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is a comprehensive and ongoing process aimed at improving teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional competencies throughout their careers. Unlike isolated training sessions, CPD involves a systematic, lifelong commitment to learning that enables teachers to continuously enhance their instructional practices, adapt to emerging educational trends, and contribute effectively to school improvement (Anadi, 2023; Day, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

According to Anadi (2023), professionalism in teaching is achieved through specialized education and ongoing

learning, which distinguishes teaching as a profession and ensures high standards in education. CPD empowers teachers to become reflective practitioners who critically assess their teaching methods, engage in collaborative learning with peers, and embrace innovations in pedagogy and curriculum development (Guskey, 2002; Timperley, 2011). This continuous growth fosters adaptability and responsiveness to the dynamic nature of education (OECD, 2020).

CPD encourages the development of a professional culture where teachers consistently evaluate and refine their classroom practices to improve student learning outcomes (Desimone, 2009). Participation in professional networks, mentorship programs, and communities of practice are vital components of CPD, facilitating collective knowledge sharing and professional support (Wenger, 1998; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). In Nigeria, where challenges such as inadequate initial teacher preparation, limited supervision, and frequent curriculum changes persist, CPD plays a crucial role in equipping educators with the necessary competencies to meet national educational goals (Akinwumi, 2023; NPE, 2013; Okebukola, 2010).

The effectiveness of CPD depends on supportive government policies, institutional leadership, resource availability, and teachers' intrinsic motivation to engage in continuous learning (Borko, 2004; Avalos, 2011). When effectively implemented, CPD not only enhances teacher performance and student achievement but also promotes professionalism, accountability, and job satisfaction among educators (Ingvarson, Meiers, & Beavis, 2005; Desimone & Garet, 2015). Therefore, CPD is indispensable for sustaining teacher quality, raising educational standards, and fostering innovation within the school

system (Anadi, 2023; Akinwumi, 2023; NPE, 2013).

Teacher Quality and the Role of Policy

The Nigerian National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) clearly emphasizes that *no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers*. This statement reflects the central role teachers play in shaping educational outcomes and driving national development. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they are the architects of learning experiences, responsible for translating educational policies into effective classroom practices. Consequently, the quality, competence, and professional growth of teachers determine, to a large extent, the success of educational reforms and the realization of national educational goals.

According to Ogundele, K.O. (2024), the quality of a nation's citizens depends critically, though not exclusively, on the quality of its teachers. This means that teacher effectiveness directly influences the intellectual, moral, and social development of learners, who in turn shape the society's future. In a similar vein, Ojo, A.O. (2024) asserts that without an adequate number of inspired and well-prepared teachers, no nation can sustain meaningful educational reform. Teachers, therefore, represent both the foundation and the future of education.

Recognizing this, educational policies at both federal and state levels in Nigeria have consistently highlighted teacher development as a key reform priority. These policies advocate for systematic in-service training and continuous professional development (CPD) as mechanisms for maintaining teacher competence and ensuring instructional quality. However, despite these policy provisions, implementation gaps persist across many states, including Adamawa, where resource constraints, weak institutional frameworks, and inconsistent

monitoring mechanisms have hindered the achievement of these goals.

As a result, there exists a disparity between policy intentions and classroom realities. While national policies articulate a vision of a professionalized, well-equipped teaching workforce, the actual conditions under which teachers work, especially in Adamawa State, often undermine this vision. The effectiveness of teacher education policies thus depends not only on their formulation but also on sustained commitment, adequate funding, and local adaptation. This disconnect between policy and practice forms the backdrop to many of the **educational challenges in Adamawa State**, where improving teacher quality remains a persistent struggle despite ongoing reform efforts.

Professional Challenges of Secondary Schools' Teachers in Adamawa State

Adamawa State, located in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria, presents a unique educational landscape characterized by both opportunities and significant challenges. Education, globally recognized as a key driver of development, social transformation, and human capital formation, has not fully realized its potential in Adamawa State due to a convergence of socio-political, economic, and institutional constraints. While education remains the bedrock for modernization and the empowerment of citizens, the delivery and quality of education in the state have been persistently hindered by several interrelated factors.

One of the most pressing challenges is the issue of insecurity caused by insurgency and banditry, which has severely disrupted the educational process in many communities, particularly in rural areas. Schools in insurgency-prone zones have been destroyed or closed, leading to a decline in school attendance and teacher

retention. Teachers who remain in service often work under stressful and unsafe conditions, which negatively affects their performance and morale. In addition, internal displacement has led to the overcrowding of schools in safer regions, putting pressure on limited facilities and resources.

A significant challenge confronting teacher development in Adamawa State is the complex interplay between the state's pronounced ethno-religious diversity, political instability, and the politicization of education. Adamawa is characterized by a mosaic of diverse ethnic and religious groups, including a near-equal split between its Christian and Muslim populations. While this diversity is a source of cultural richness, it can become a source of contention when manipulated for political gain. This politicization manifests in various ways that directly undermine educational quality. For instance, the uneven distribution of educational resources is a persistent problem, with allocations often skewed toward areas based on political loyalties rather than genuine educational need. Favored local government areas may receive better infrastructure, more learning materials, and additional teacher training slots, while marginalized communities are left with dilapidated schools and under-resourced teachers. This practice creates significant disparities in educational quality, further exacerbating inequalities between urban and rural areas, and between different local government areas within the state.

Poverty and economic hardship further exacerbate the situation. A large proportion of parents are unable to afford basic educational materials, thereby reducing student attendance and engagement. For teachers, low remuneration and poor welfare conditions make it difficult to remain motivated or to invest in self-improvement through professional development. Consequently,

the teaching profession in the state suffers from low prestige and high turnover, with many qualified teachers migrating to other states or sectors for better opportunities. Infrastructural decay also poses a serious obstacle. Many public secondary schools in Adamawa State operate without adequate classrooms, laboratories, libraries, or ICT facilities. The lack of conducive learning environments undermines the delivery of quality instruction and limits the application of modern teaching methodologies. This infrastructural deficit also constrains the implementation of in-service training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programs, which often require functional facilities, teaching aids, and digital resources.

Moreover, institutional weaknesses such as poor supervision, inadequate funding, and weak policy implementation further diminish educational effectiveness. While state and federal governments have initiated reforms aimed at improving teacher education and secondary school quality, the absence of sustained financial and administrative commitment often stalls progress.

The combined effect of these challenges is a system where the professional development of teachers is hindered at multiple levels. Inconsistent policy implementation, weak monitoring, and political interference create a fragile and inequitable educational environment. For many teachers, professional growth is not a guaranteed outcome of their efforts but rather a circumstance influenced by political and ethnic dynamics beyond their control. This disconnect fundamentally undermines efforts to build a qualified, motivated, and professionally developed teaching workforce across Adamawa State.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition among stakeholders that revitalizing teacher quality through in-service training and continuous

professional development is crucial to rebuilding the educational system. Strengthening teacher capacity and motivation remains the most effective strategy for addressing the state's educational crisis, enhancing learning outcomes, and promoting long-term social transformation.

In response to these challenges, Adamawa State has embraced in-service training and CPD initiatives through institutions such as the Federal College of Education (FCE), the Faculty of Education at Modibbo Adama University (MAU), and the National Teachers' Institute (NTI). These bodies organize refresher courses, sandwich degree programmes, workshops, and conferences to build teacher capacity. However, much of the training remains fragmented, sporadic, and donor-driven rather than systematically integrated into teacher career pathways. Teachers are often treated as passive recipients of knowledge, limiting the transformative impact of these programmes (Tunde, 2023).

Nevertheless, innovative practices are emerging. Some teachers in Adamawa now participate in curriculum reviews, classroom-based research, and peer mentoring, treating the classroom as a learning laboratory (Afolabi, O.L. 2022). Out-of-school engagements, including partnerships with NGOs and community organizations, have further broadened professional development opportunities. These efforts point to the potential of CPD to empower teachers not only as implementers of policy but also as leaders of educational innovation and reform.

Hindrances to Effective Continuous Professional Development of Teachers in Adamawa State

Professional development requires that teachers aim to teach better than they have ever taught before. It requires a shift from the usual traditional method of classroom

teaching to effective, innovative teaching. Like students who learn to acquire new knowledge and ideas, teachers must be actively involved in learning, acquiring new ideas, and having opportunities to discuss, reflect upon, try out, and acquire better instructional approaches.

Professional development of teachers involves retraining teachers in curriculum and subject content. Retraining increases knowledge and improves the skills and competencies of serving teachers.

Despite the recognized importance of in-service training and continuous professional development (CPD) for secondary school teachers, several obstacles hinder their effectiveness in Adamawa State:

1. Inadequate Government Support and Funding

Government support and financing play a decisive role in determining the success of in-service training and continuous professional development (CPD) programmes. However, evidence suggests that teacher development in Adamawa State suffers from inconsistent policy implementation, weak institutional monitoring, and insufficient budgetary allocation. These issues reflect broader national challenges in sustaining professional growth among teachers in Nigeria.

Although education is widely recognized as a key driver of national development, the level of investment in the sector remains inadequate. Recent data challenge the generalization that Adamawa State's annual allocations consistently fall below international benchmarks. Specifically, the 2024 budget allocated 21.25% of its total expenditure to education, placing it among the states that meet or exceed the UNESCO-recommended range of 15–20%. Even with increased allocation, challenges in funding implementation and

mismanagement can undermine the impact. For example, a 2025 study examining UBE implementation in Adamawa noted insufficient funding as a hindering factor, citing the commonly misquoted UNESCO 26% figure.

Despite this notable budgetary commitment, evidence from within Nigeria suggests that inadequate funding remains a significant challenge for the education sector, impacting the quality of teaching materials, infrastructure, and the provision of effective workshops.

Moreover, inconsistent government commitment and the absence of a coordinated framework for teacher development have made most in-service and CPD programs irregular and unsustainable. Analyses from different regions and timeframes consistently identify weak policy implementation, inadequate funding, institutional corruption, and a lack of political will as key constraints. This results in professional development being treated as a series of sporadic events rather than a sustained process of growth and reflection. The result is a system where professional development is often treated as a one-off event rather than a continuous process of growth and reflection.

2. Shortage of Facilities and Equipment

Effective in-service training and continuous professional development (CPD) depend on the availability of adequate teaching and learning resources. Modern teacher development now extends beyond workshops and seminars to include access to ICT tools, well-equipped laboratories, libraries, and digital learning platforms that facilitate interactive and self-directed learning. However, in many post-primary schools across Adamawa State, such facilities remain insufficient or non-

functional, thereby limiting teachers' exposure to innovative instructional methods and 21st-century pedagogical tools.

According to Adeyemi, A. O., & Olalekan, M. (2021). The absence of functional ICT infrastructure in schools continues to hinder teachers' ability to integrate technology into classroom instruction and professional learning. Similarly, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2021) reports that inadequate facilities remain a major constraint in teacher training centers across Nigeria, particularly in the North-East region, where insecurity and underinvestment have disrupted educational development.

This shortage of facilities not only affects teachers' productivity but also discourages participation in digital-based CPD programmes. The infusion of technology into education is a critical aspect of improving learning outcomes, yet it requires teachers who are skilled in using digital tools effectively. However, the absence of functional ICT infrastructure continues to hinder this progress, particularly in regions like Adamawa State. Studies on educational technology in Nigeria consistently point to challenges such as inadequate power supply, poor internet connectivity, and limited access to hardware as significant barriers to effective technology integration and professional learning. Without access to such resources and the necessary training to use them, efforts to improve teacher quality and classroom performance remain significantly constrained, a reality that persists across many states in Nigeria despite the increased emphasis on technology in education.

3. Weak Institutional Commitment

Institutional commitment plays a central role in ensuring the success of

in-service training and continuous professional development (CPD) initiatives. In Adamawa State, however, weak administrative coordination and limited oversight by education authorities have significantly hindered the effectiveness of teacher development programmes. The state's school boards and supervisory bodies often fail to demonstrate consistent commitment to teacher growth, as training opportunities are neither systematically planned nor equitably implemented across schools.

In many cases, priority is given to selected schools or teachers without clear criteria, leaving others neglected despite urgent developmental needs. This inconsistency creates disparities in teacher competence and morale across the education system. Furthermore, the recommended teacher-student ratio of 1:25 is rarely observed in public secondary schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms that limit teachers' capacity to apply new instructional methods gained from training.

Institutional inefficiency and weak policy enforcement are significant factors contributing to the poor quality of teacher supervision and professional advancement in many Nigerian states. As documented by studies on education policy implementation across the country, without strong institutional will, clearly defined standards, and transparent monitoring frameworks, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes risk becoming ceremonial rather than transformative. This is particularly relevant in Adamawa State, where weak monitoring mechanisms and persistent implementation gaps have been observed. Therefore, strengthening institutional commitment and transparency is essential for

achieving meaningful and sustainable teacher development, ensuring that well-intentioned policies and budget allocations translate into tangible improvements in the classroom.

4. Lack of Coherent, Long-Term Planning

In Adamawa State, professional development programmes are often treated as isolated interventions rather than components of a structured, long-term teacher growth strategy. Most in-service training activities take the form of occasional workshops, seminars, or refresher courses organized by the Ministry of Education or donor agencies. For example, records from the Adamawa State Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB, 2024) indicate that the last major state-wide in-service training for secondary school teachers was held in July 2024, focused on equipping teachers with the skills needed to implement the new curriculum and prepare students for standardized exams. Since then, training efforts have been sporadic and donor-driven, lacking a consistent framework for follow-up or impact assessment.

The lack of coherent planning further undermines the sustainability of teacher development outcomes. While training programs are conducted, the lack of follow-up and long-term evaluation means their effectiveness is rarely monitored. A study on CPD programs in colleges of education, for example, highlighted the "lack of a systematic and comprehensive training needs analysis" and weak institutional engagement as profound challenges. In Adamawa State, this is evident in the absence of an established mechanism for monitoring the long-term effects of training on teaching performance or student learning outcomes. Consequently, many teachers revert to traditional teaching methods after initial training sessions due to a lack of ongoing

institutional support for implementation, reflection, or peer collaboration.

In-service training has become reactive rather than proactive due to a series of systemic challenges, including the absence of a long-term professional development policy, irregular funding, and weak coordination among stakeholders. To ensure CPD is effective, Adamawa State needs to implement a more deliberate approach. This includes adopting a structured development plan that aligns training content with national education priorities. Equally important are consistent funding and the establishment of robust mechanisms for ongoing mentorship, monitoring, and evaluation, which would support teachers beyond short-term interventions.

Way Forward: Recommendations for Improving CPD

To overcome these challenges and align teacher development with global standards, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen Policy and Government Commitment

- ✓ The Adamawa State Government should prioritize teacher professional development as a central component of education reform.
- ✓ Clear policies should mandate periodic in-service training and CPD for all teachers, with monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance.

2. Increase Funding for Teacher Development

- ✓ Allocate at least the UNESCO-recommended 20% of annual budget to education, with a clear earmark for teacher training and professional development.

- ✓ Partner with international agencies, NGOs, and the private sector to mobilize additional resources for teacher capacity building.

3. Expand Access to ICT and Learning Facilities

- ✓ Integrate ICT tools into teacher training programmes and ensure that every secondary school has functional ICT laboratories.
- ✓ Provide teachers with continuous exposure to digital learning resources, smart classrooms, and online CPD platforms.

4. Promote Collaborative Partnerships

- ✓ Strengthen partnerships with teacher training institutions such as **NTI, FCE, and MAU** to ensure structured, research-informed training.
- ✓ Encourage collaboration with professional associations, NGOs, and community organizations to expand CPD opportunities.

5. Institutionalize Long-Term Professional Development Plans

- ✓ Move beyond one-shot workshops by creating **comprehensive CPD frameworks** that include mentoring, peer review, classroom-based research, and continuous assessment of teacher growth.
- ✓ Encourage teachers to engage in reflective practice, action research, and networking with colleagues to share best practices.

6. Ensure Equity and Standardization

- ✓ Apply transparent and equitable criteria in the distribution of resources for schools, ensuring that rural and underserved schools benefit equally.
- ✓ Enforce adherence to the teacher-student ratio to improve classroom management and enhance teacher effectiveness.

7. Build Teacher Motivation and Retention

- ✓ Introduce incentives such as career progression, recognition awards, and improved welfare packages for teachers who actively participate in CPD.
- ✓ Organize periodic forums for teachers to voice challenges and contribute to policy decisions, thereby increasing ownership of the process.

Conclusion

For Adamawa State to meet global standards in secondary education, continuous professional development (CPD) must be recognized and treated as a cornerstone of educational reform. Strengthening CPD requires addressing persistent challenges such as underfunding, inadequate training facilities, and weak institutional commitment to teacher development. By investing in long-term, structured, and coherent CPD programmes, the state can significantly transform the competence, motivation, and effectiveness of its secondary school teachers. A robust CPD system will not only enhance instructional quality but also lead to measurable improvements in student performance in both internal and external examinations. Beyond academic outcomes, sustained teacher development contributes to broader socio-economic progress by equipping educators with the skills needed to drive innovation and adaptation in a rapidly changing world. As teachers

remain central to modernization and national development, their empowerment through continuous professional development will form the foundation of a resilient, progressive, and globally competitive educational system in Adamawa State.

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