

# Honing Collaborative Learning Approaches for Sustainable Professional Development among Practitioners in the Educational System in Nigeria

Okogbaa, Veronica Emem (PhD)

Department of Educational Management,  
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumulolumeni, PH

Email: veeokogbaa@gmail.com

---

**Abstract:** The paper examines collaborative learning approaches and projects it as an extremely useful teaching/learning method for professional development programmes of educators. It explains what professional development represents and how it can contribute to worker's job enhancement/performance to ultimately affect students' academic achievement and overall school goal attainment. The paper is also of the opinion that professional development should not be a one-off process but should be systematic, sustainable and of such quality to meet the contemporary development needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century educators in Nigeria. Challenges to professional development and specific areas needing attention for skills enhancement among educators in today's world are also highlighted. The challenges, the author noted are not insurmountable but must be tackled headlong by taking the necessary steps to improve the programmes. In the light of this, a number of recommendations are made, one of which is that educational organizations should put policies in place to guide the planning and implementation of professional development for all educators in institutions at all level to ensure quality, systematization and sustainability of the programmes

**Keywords:** Collaborative Learning Approach, Professional Development, Sustainability, Practitioners, Educational System.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most professions and work places admit new members based on the initial possession of a reservoir of knowledge and skills commensurate to the professional credentials and requirements of the job. For employees to continue to remain relevant in that profession or organization they must demonstrate ability to effectively and continuously adapt to subsequent job requirements and expectations. They are able to do this if they go through additional forms of learning by attending formal courses for further academic degrees, attending conferences and such other activities and or by participating in informal learning opportunities situated in their jobs. All activities aimed at helping employees continue to demonstrate competence in their professions and also excel in them, are generally referred to as professional development. For most organizations professional development continues throughout the work life of the individual.

In education, professional development is used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers and other educators to improve their practice (Edglossary.org, 2013). Educators are expected to continue to improve in their professional knowledge, competences, skills and effectiveness in order to remain relevant in the schools. The teaching profession's body of knowledge unlike

**International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning**Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

other professions is a mixture of pedagogy, subject knowledge and practice. Teachers and other educators' learnings must target these areas and processes that target specific changes in the areas of professional knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and actions that holistically prepare them for the roles they play. Failure to do this maybe of disadvantage to the educators when innovative practices are introduced into the educational system.

Schools generally are established to address teaching and learning needs of a targeted cohort of learners in a society. To effectively achieve the goals of educational programmes at all levels, those who manage the schools must address students' achievement and continually improve them to line up with expectations. Chapman and Counts (2012), following this line of thought have opined that the quality of teaching is a critical factor that influences students' learning and subsequently their achievement. To tackle students' achievement, the quality of teachers and their teaching must be addressed.

In Nigeria the National Policy on Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), in the section on Teacher Education recognizes this pivotal role of quality teachers/teaching in the provision of quality education at all levels. Thus to address the maintenance of quality in the system, the policy provides for:

- Appointment and retention of academically and professionally qualified persons as teachers and heads of educational institutions;
- Putting in place, a coherent national framework for teacher development and professional teaching standards that sets out what teachers should know and be able to do at all levels of education and at the various stages of their professional development (i.e. on graduation from initial training; on completion of an induction period and for professional accomplishment);
- Improvement and regulation of career-long professional development of teachers through the provision of a wide range of programmes and multiple pathways to provide serving teachers with regular opportunities for updating their knowledge and skills...p45.

These provisions are laudable for a national framework as pertaining to teacher development and continued relevance, but it must be meticulously implemented for the benefits to accrue to the system. Additionally, the policy also provides that "all newly recruited teachers shall undergo a formal process of induction and that in-service training be an integral part of continuing teacher education, thus making it mandatory for all school proprietors to provide in-service education for teachers" (FRN, 2014:44). This second aspect is to further strengthen the process to achieve sustainability for teacher development. It is unclear at this point if all these aspects of teacher development provisions are being adhered to.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is faced with numerous challenges and citizens must be prepared to tackle the problems. Current skills developed must measure up to offer learners requisite skills to excel in life. Teaching approaches and learning activities presented to learners should be such that facilitate the skills that learners need to acquire. The world of work also is characterized with high tech, increased ICT usage, creativity and collaborative efforts. Part of the challenge facing the educational system currently is the ability to adequately prepare citizens to face these emerging challenges. Educational institutions among other things have the additional tasks of producing highly skilled, creative and technology savvy individuals to meet the global manpower needs of organizations. To a large extent the success or failure of organizations depend on the people working in them; their skills, ideas, knowledge, job satisfaction levels, commitment and their abilities to perform job tasks for the attainment of organizational goals. Wagner (2008) has identified seven survival skills necessary this century and has encouraged that students must be taught these skills to prepare them for adult life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. The skills include:

- Critical thinking and problem solving.
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence.
- Agility and adaptability.
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism.
- Effective oral and written communication.
- Accessing and analyzing information.
- Curiosity and imagination

Collaboration which is among these survival skills has been identified as a key strategy that holds most organized activities in establishments. It has been described as the process of two or more persons working together to complete a task or achieve a goal. It means sharing knowledge, learning from others, giving and receiving feedback and considering the opinions of others. In collaboration each person contributes their expertise and the results and benefits of the collaborative effort is more than if the task was performed by only one individual. When teachers for instance collaborate, they work together to increase students' learning and achievement. Thus the talents, interest, background and strength of each teacher is brought to bear and the resultant effect is greater achievement and the building of a greater sense of trust and accountability among the teachers. As a learning strategy, it is a process where learners are grouped into small groups to work together to discover facts and understandings about specific problems while the teacher acts as a facilitator.

The importance of professional development in the work life of teachers to achieve greater school effectiveness is not debateable. This paper has taken the position of emphasizing the need to make deliberate plans for teachers' professional development. But more importantly, this paper proposes that the collaborative learning approach should be adopted as the dominant learning strategy in the professional development programmes for teachers. This is predicated on the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century work environment emphasizes creativity and collaboration as major work skills. For teachers to teach such skills to their learners, they must themselves be practising them. After all, like the saying goes "you cannot give what you do not have". If teachers do not have collaborative skills and do not demonstrate them by collaborating among themselves, then how will they impart or sharpen such skills among the students? This paper therefore upholds the notion that professional development programmes afford teachers excellent opportunities to learn and grow but advocates that the opportunities should be used to entrench collaborative skills among the teachers. The understanding is that as teachers participate in the learning experiences provided, they will learn and get to practice first-hand how to collaborate among themselves and thus be able to teach the skills to their students.

The second aspect of this discourse is on making professional development for practitioners in the educational industry sustainable. Sustainability here is used to refer to the ability of a phenomenon to exist continually. It also describes the ability to maintain something at a particular level for as long as is necessary. For instance, if having highly skilled teachers in the educational system is what is advocated for as is the case here, sustainability would mean that processes have been put in place to ensure this. This can be interpreted to mean that only highly skilled teachers will be engaged in the teaching process and this will continue to be the case for as long as possible. When professional development programmes are sustainable, it means that the practice is preserved to be prolonged or carried on for a long while in the future. Furthermore, it also means that the process meets the needs of the present day people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs ([www.iisd.org](http://www.iisd.org), nd).

Additionally, the notion of sustainable development recognises the world as a global village with all its diversities, requiring individuals to anticipate new horizons of possibilities and strive to resolve common problems and tensions between individuals and groups, through dialogue and collaborations. Thus sustainability is considered to be a paradigm for thinking about the future in which the environment, societal and economic considerations are balanced in the pursuit of development and improved quality of life. Espousing sustainability calls for dissemination of the requisite knowledge and skills for lifelong learning to help people find new solutions to environmental, economic and social problems.

This shift towards what is generally referred to as 'sustainable development' Okogbaa (2017), adds that it focuses on educating individuals to make informed decisions about the societies they live, in order to promote improvement that is tangible and sustainable. The major goal of such education is to equipping individuals with skills and knowledge to make decisions that inform positive actions that add value to the society both now and in the future. Thus development that is sustainable espouses the responsible use of the things especially about environment situations without causing irreversible damages for present and future generations. Such education is promoted as a veritable tool to create this awareness among people the society in general. Who best should be trusted but educators to advocate this as they hone their collaborative skills.

### **Collaborative learning**

The term "collaborate" originated from the Latin verb *collaborare*. The "co" means "together" and "laborare" means "to work". This can be interpreted to mean "to work in conjunction with others". Babu, Suresh and Pariventhan, (2017), describe collaborative learning as a term used for learning that incorporates an assortment of methodologies. These

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

methodologies they explain encourage joint learning that boosts sharing of thoughts and deliberate association. Collaborative learning has its roots in Social Constructivism and the cognitive developmental theories propounded by Vygotsky (1934). Vygotsky opines that all learning and development is socially constructed and arise at the social level first before settling at the individual level. Gerlach (1994), in his own contribution had explained that collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a natural social act in which participants talk among themselves. Thus learners take part in the discussions and by implication take responsibility for their learning. Betterlesson.com (2020), explains further that this Social Constructivism theory suggests that when students work together, socio-cognitive conflicts develop and promotes deeper reasoning among them as they argue back and forth. In collaborative learning therefore, the learners have the opportunity to think and talk together, discuss ideas, ask questions, analyse and solve problems as a joint scholarly venture. Thus learning is deeper and the learners can construct knowledge for themselves.

In the traditional models of education, students passively absorb and reproduce what they have been taught. Collaborative learning is different because it is an active learning method and the learner is an active agent in the process. Describing collaborative learning further, Sawyer and Obeid (2017), add that students are actively involved and group members can cross boundaries between different areas of the work or co-decide the best ways to collaborate on their joint project. This create opportunities for all learners in the process to actively participate.

From the foregoing, collaborative learning is a process that:

- Allows small groups of students to pursue shared goals and develop solutions to complex problems.
- Transfers the responsibility of learning to the learners as they play the roles of “researcher” and “self-directed learner”.
- Allows some learners to learn more easily and readily from peers.
- Offers chances for students to solve problems.
- Can give appropriate skills in social interactions such as cooperation, listening to others, formulating opinions and compromise.

In terms of effectiveness, literature has shown that collaborative learning has recorded successes in the areas of learning such as:

- In interpretation of texts and critical thinking
- In students’ ability to draw from multidisciplinary skills as they brainstorm
- In scientific inquiry and research applications.

In the teaching and learning process, collaboration may involve:

- Learners teaching one another
- Learners teaching the teacher and
- The teacher teaching the learners

Thus it is a teaching strategy that involves the simultaneous use of numerous methodologies in the teaching and learning process. Through collaboration with peers and instructor facilitation as explained by Brown and Campione, (1994), students can engage in enquiry-driven problem solving. Enquiry-driven problem solving is a higher order learning which can boost creativity and critical thinking among learners and reduce passive inactive learning by rote. Thus as a teaching strategy, collaboration is a much needed intervention process this 21<sup>st</sup> Century to develop the appropriate skills needed by citizens for survival. It is an excellent teaching technique, and all practitioners can benefit from it.

### Collaborative Learning Methods

Some collaborative learning methods are

- Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
- Collaborative Learning Through Oral Presentations

**International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning**Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

**Problem-Based Learning (PBL):** Here students can attempt to solve a complex problem that does not have a single correct answer. First they work in collaborative groups to identify what new information they need to learn to solve the problem. Secondly, they engage in self-directed learning which involves applying the new knowledge to solve the problem. In this type of learning, teachers only act to facilitate students' self-directed processes but not directly providing knowledge or information.

**Collaborative Learning Through Oral Presentations:** Here the focus is to develop public speaking and presentation skills. Group members are encouraged to communicate with each other to establish what roles each would play. Students with diverse skill levels can tutor each other in their respective areas of strength. As students explore their topics together, they exchange ideas, pose half-formed thoughts and constructively disagree about the topics. Thus working together can build camaraderie among the learners and create an "intellectual playground". When students find pleasure in learning, it can improve their classroom experience and the relationships they form with fellow students which can make learning more enjoyable and fruitful. These kinds of skills are much to be desired and indispensable for building more cohesive communities in today's conflict ridden societies and should thus be espoused.

When teachers work and learn together, they form strong teams and develop important professional and personal relationships. These enable them support and draw strength from one another. Collaboration between teachers make the teachers watch out for each other and be each other's keepers. Ultimately while collaborating, the practitioners will be able to contribute to school improvement, student successes and in building a strong community of learning.

Teacher collaboration when effectively applied can provide opportunities to

- Ask questions and seek clarifications
- Seek guidance
- Meet in discussion groups to help each other cope with the teaching job.

Part of the burden of this paper is on achieving sustainability for educators' development programmes. Plymouth University (n.d), offers five pedagogical approaches that can be used to teach or educate for Sustainable Development. The fifth of these approaches as outlined is on collaborative learning. It states in part that: "Collaborative approach can be very useful especially when it features contributions from guest speakers, work-based learning, interdisciplinary /multidisciplinary working, and collaborative learning and co-inquiry". Due to the fact that teachers and other practitioners need to think and talk with each other on a sustained basis, opportunities should be provided for them to do so in developmental programmes. Some of the ways teachers especially can connect and collaborate with themselves have been identified to include:

- Teaching and learning from each other
- Collaborating on writing lesson plans
- Sharing their experiences
- Building social networks
- Giving and receiving feedback from each other
- Visiting each other's classrooms
- Planning and executing inter-school visits to watch activities in the classrooms of teachers in other schools, etc.

Thus rethinking the purpose of education and re-organizing the way learning is done in both in educational institutions and in professional development programmes for educators has become an urgent need requiring urgent intervention.

**Revising Teacher Quality Through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teacher Development Programmes**

There has been increased attention on "teacher quality" this 21<sup>st</sup> Century because research has shown that teachers' competencies can impact students' achievements. Consequently, policies concerning "teacher quality" have had to specifically include aspects of the ability of teachers to improve students learning "to meet expected standards of performance" as provided in the educational goals of each country. To meet the standards, most nations have had to

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

review teacher professional development programmes to ensure that they match the requirements of their educational systems. Additionally, research has shown that professional development is the primary mechanism available in schools to help teachers constantly learn and hone their skills over time. Thus, professional development in the educational sector is one of the ways that the quality of teaching can be enhanced to improve students' learning and achievement. When teachers and others in the educational sector receive the necessary help to develop their skills, they are adequately equipped and positioned to perform optimally. Successful schools in this regard are high performing and effective. Lunenburg and Irby (2006), have described effective schools as high performing and are schools where the following are prevalent:

- High achievements by students
- High expectations by everyone in the school community
- High morale among teachers and
- High commitment by the principals and staff.

In such an environment, staff interest and commitment towards work are heightened. Tasks initiation and completion will also be at its best because staff clearly understand what they are doing, what their jobs demand and have the appropriate skills for such jobs.

### The Worth of Professional Development

Professional development programmes are offered by organizations to their employees for capacity building to improve their performances. Capacity building is a widely used education jargon that refers to any effort made to improve the ability, skills and expertise of employees. Some of the benefits of professional development programmes in most organizations have been identified to include:

- Increased job efficiency and reduction of frustration of non-performance among employees.
- Reduced tardiness, absenteeism, negative attitudes to work and excessive complaints by employees.
- Reduced accident rates and increase use of safe practices.
- Increased job satisfaction which makes the employees happier with themselves because they can now get the job done.
- Reducing staff turnover and its accompanying costs to the organization.
- Providing additional skills to deal with technological advancements and innovations.
- Reducing wastages occasioned by trial and error and the use of obsolete techniques by ill equipped employees.
- Enabling organizations to update and modernize their procedures and operational techniques.

Amah (2006), observed that to the individual employees specifically, the benefits of training/development are numerous. Some of which are that:

- It increases their work experience.
- It also increases job satisfaction, performances and heightens morale,
- It increases their self-worth and value in the labour market.
- It enhances their prospects for internal promotions and opportunities for better paying jobs in other organizations.

### Training and Developmental Programmes in the Educational Organizations

Educational organizations offer various categories of activities as training and development programmes to employees. Some are hands-on capacity building programmes for immediate and utilizable skills to increase employees' abilities to perform specific tasks, such as ability to operate certain machines, use facilities such as computers, projectors, computer software, interactive boards, Padlets, etc. Examples of some training programmes in education may include: hands-on

skill acquisition programmes at workshop demonstrations, seminars, teachers' interschool visits, peer/team teaching sessions, demonstration lessons, etc.

Others are programmes or processes for acquiring broader, longer term, but less tangible skills, such as in the development of interpersonal skills, decision-making skills, communication skills, leadership skills, etc. through management and leadership programmes. It could also include on-the-job training programmes as short courses, management programmes, classroom instructions in some formal educational programmes, internships, etc.

Each of these categories of programmes could be carried out internally or externally. Internal arrangements could be in-house processes where employees receive their training within their work environments. In such cases resource persons within or outside their environments act as facilitators during the seminars, conferences, workshops, etc. This is sometimes referred to as on-the-job training because it occurs while active work is going on and the recipients do not leave their work environment. The activities take place in the work place and the staff are often required to attend to one or more routine tasks before the programme commences. On the other hand, external arrangements also occur where the employees are sent outside their work places to attend the programmes. This sometimes is referred to as off-the-job training because it requires employees to go outside the work environment. For these programmes to be sustainable and beneficiary to the recipients, they must be regular and qualitative. The organizations also must develop policies that will enforce them. Such policies as has been explained by Wilton (2011), are what the organization will do and the nature of the programmes they will adopt to improve and develop the workers. The policies give direction and reflect the values that the organizations place on staff training and development programmes. In the absence of such policies, it will be difficult to hold the organizations accountable. The programmes may also not be qualitative or sustainable except there are yardsticks with which to measure compliance. Finally, it is necessary to support the policies with appropriate budgetary allocations to promote compliance as at when due because lack of funds could truncate the process no matter how laudable the policies are.

Professional development programmes are very important for growth and development and ultimately the sustainability of the processes in the organization. Their implementation therefore must be carried out with all seriousness to ensure it effectiveness. There should be a systematic approach to support and coordinate professional development in organizations. Policies for professional development programmes for teachers should cover such aspects as:

1. Identification of their training needs.
2. Choice of appropriate training methods to meet identified needs (in this case collaboration).
3. Implementation of the preferred method
4. Evaluation of the training process to ascertain the extent of gains or benefits to the individual teachers and the organization.

The real worth of professional development programmes both to the teachers and the schools at large is in its ability to impart knowledge and skills that will improve teachers work behaviour, efficiency and ultimately improve performance. Thus, educational organizations should provide opportunities for teachers to improve and to also use these expanded capacities. When capacities are improved, teachers will experience some form of elation and the perception of the quality of their work-life will improve tremendously. When these additional skills are utilized, they boost morale, increase motivation and job satisfaction among the teachers. Self-actualized, motivated teachers who perceive their work life as positive, will put in their best to perform their roles and they will be more effective at what they do. Ultimately, the students will benefit and so will the schools.

Furthermore, managing schools for high performance requires that both the principal and the entire staff should possess the requisite skills for high performance. Thus, professional development should be seen as a need for everyone in the system. Just as it is important for the teacher to grow and develop, the educational leader must also grow and develop to be able to provide commensurate guidance to the staff in the school. This means that the principal should be able to determine the needs of teachers in their schools through monitoring the instructions to see how both teachers and students are getting on. Effective principals, according to Lunenburg and Irby (2006), must focus on two major areas of professional development in the schools:

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

- Their own (principals') professional growth.
- Teachers' professional growth.

While teachers are provided with regular opportunities to acquire additional skills to match their role expectations following their initial employment, this should not be done to the exclusion of the Principals. The school heads must never come to the conclusion that they know enough of what is to be learnt in their profession. It should be understood that society is dynamic and knowledge is evolving. Researches are ongoing in the fields of education, new discoveries are made on a regular basis and student needs are also changing. Focusing only on teachers' growth to the exclusion of school heads' learning needs could produce highly skilled teachers and ill developed principals who are unable to offer the needed support and guidance that teachers need.

Additionally, teachers usually depend on their principals for support as reservoirs of information on current trends and effective instructional practices. As instructional leaders, school heads should be knowledgeable about the different models of teaching, the theoretical reasons for adopting particular teaching models and the theories underlying certain technologically based learning environments. Thus, principals as instructional leaders, need to be up-to-date also about curriculum development, effective pedagogical strategies and assessment methods. That way, they can act as resource persons to teachers, especially the newly employed ones, to build their confidence in performing instructional roles as expected in the classroom to improve students' academic performance.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that professional development of teachers is very serious venture due to the fact that it is capable of impacting the efficiency and performance of educators. Thus attendance of occasional workshops or conferences whose themes/subject matter are not clear-cut should not be blindly accepted as professional development by practitioners. Professional development programmes targeting principals and teachers should be deliberately planned to aim at their specific needs. The processes should gradually build the skills and knowledge base required for efficiency, growth and development on the job. In the light of this, educators who casually walk into Conferences, Seminars and Workshop venues just to pick up certificates without actual participation in the planned sessions, should be discouraged. They should not be considered to have undergone professional development, at best they have added to their stack of certificates which are of little value to their career path. Such acts should be continually frowned at in the educational system to dissuade offenders and to redirect attention to skill-impacting, engaging and relevant programmes that target the specific needs of the participants which are beneficiary to their growth in the field.

Well-articulated professional development programmes should provide participants with new insights, skills, knowledge and behavioural changes required for continuous growth and development to enhance their job performance. To buttress this the Glossary of Educational reform (2013), identified some of the ways that professional development programmes have been criticized. These include the fact that sometimes:

- a) They are poorly designed
- b) They are poorly executed
- c) They are poorly scheduled
- d) They are poorly facilitated
- e) Teachers feel that some of them are irrelevant to their teaching needs.
- f) Teachers feel that some of them are irrelevant to their day-to-day professional responsibilities.

Each of these areas should be given serious considerations during the planning stages and steps taken to ensure that the programmes are not marred with these weaknesses. Additionally, the programmes should not be wishy-washy but well-articulated and should factor in continuity and sustainability by building new skills on previous ones. The programmes should also be of high quality and up-to-date to add value to the professional growth of the educators.

### Areas of Professional Development Needs for Educators

There are numerous areas of need in the educational sector which professional development programmes can address such that both administrators and teachers can acquire requisite skills and competencies to continuously improve on their



## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

practice over time. Examples of broad areas and topics that can serve as target areas of professional development for educators to strengthen practice as suggested by Okogbaa (2020), include:

- i) Further education and knowledge in teachers' teaching subject areas.
- ii) Training and mentoring in specialized teaching techniques that can be used across subjects such as differentiation (varying techniques based on students' learning needs/interest), literacy strategies (techniques for improving reading and writing skills), etc.
- iii) Learning new technological skills, e.g. use of interactive whiteboards, blended learning, use of Padlets, Hyperdoc, GoogleDoc, Google Classroom, Google Teams, etc.
- iv) Improving fundamental teaching techniques such as how to manage a classroom, questioning techniques and how to frame questions in ways that elicit deeper thinking and more creative answers from students.
- v) Teaching leadership skills.
- vi) Building specialized skills to teach better and support certain population of students. These could include students with learning disabilities, and students not proficient in language of instruction, etc. That way, instead of just watching students struggle and achieve very little, teachers are trained in the perceived areas of students' needs to support the students during the learning process. This would ultimately improve the academic achievement of all category of students.
- vii) Other areas of professional development could be on conflict resolution, work ethics, stress management, artificial intelligence, emotional intelligence, etc.

Each of these areas can be taught using the collaborative learning technique. In which case all the participant will be deliberately grouped for learning purposes and allowed to learn from each other and thus take responsibility for their learning. The resource persons will only act as facilitators while the learners actively participate and own their learning, thus making the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. Meaningful changes do not just happen, they are brought about by purposeful, focused and sustained plans that are meticulously followed through. Professional development in the educational enterprise can fall into this category and not just be a one-off or single disjointed/disconnected activities that have little or no bearing with what goes on in real situations in the educational industry. The activities should be those that stem from needs occasioned by goes on in practice. Planned professional development programmes should always result in improved practice/performances for all categories of practitioners. This certainly will result in effective outcomes at all times and the educational enterprise will be the better for it.

### Criteria for Selecting Professional Development Programmes

Some criteria that have been identified by researchers that should be met for selecting professional development programmes include the following:

- If conferences and workshops; they must be directly connected to a school's academic programme.
- Must be connected to what teachers are teaching or the roles that administrators are playing.
- They must involve learning opportunities that are sustained over longer periods of time.
- They must involve learning activities that are directly connected to what schools and teachers are actually doing on a daily basis or challenges that they face in the course of performing their duties. A typical example in the Nigerian public schools is the issue of overcrowded classrooms. This is a huge challenge for teachers, especially for the beginning teachers. Training programmes could be deliberately organized to coach teachers to handle teaching in overcrowded classrooms because it appears that the phenomenon has come to stay in the public schools.
- Professional development should be a continuous focus throughout an individual's work life.

### Challenges of Professional Development in the Educational System

Some of the challenges associated with providing professional development in the educational sector have been listed to include:

## International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning

Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

- Finding adequate time during the school day for teachers and principals to participate in the programmes.
- Securing sufficient funding for school activities
- Teachers overburdened workloads
- Lack of interest by staff due to absence of motivation
- Insufficient support from the School Boards or the Ministry of Education running the schools.
- The situation where staff are expected to fund their own professional development.

These challenges are easy to overcome if staff and employers see the importance of the development programmes and the invaluable opportunities they offer for capacity building to improve employee performances and organizational practices.

### 2. CONCLUSION

The real worth of training both to the individual worker and the organization at large is in its ability to impart knowledge and skills that will improve the work behaviour, efficiency and ultimately improve staff performance. Thus organizations including schools should provide opportunities for their employees to improve and to utilize their expanded capacities. Teachers and other staff need to be given opportunities regularly to acquire additional skills to match their expected roles throughout their work life.

### 3. SUGGESTIONS

The paper suggested the following for the purposes of improving professional development programmes to positively impact practice in education:

1. That the collaborative learning approach should be adopted as the predominant teaching/learning method in professional development programmes to build collaborative skills among educators.
2. That schools at all levels should have policies to guide the planning and implementation of professional development programmes to ensure compliance.
3. That professional development programmes should be deliberately interspersed throughout the work life of educators in such a way that serving educators will know what programmes they are due for, at every point in time.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Amah, E. (2006). *Human resource management*. Port Harcourt: Amethyst & Colleagues Publishers
- [2] Babu, G., Suresh, P. & Pariventhan, K. (2017). Enhancement of learning through collaborative learning technique. *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 4(9).
- [3] Brown, A. L. & Campione, J. C. (1994). *Guided discovery in a community of learners*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- [4] Chapman, J. C. & Counts, G. S. (2012). *Principles of education*. literary Licensing, LLC.
- [5] Glossary of Education Reform, (2013). Professional Development Definition [www.eduglossary.org](http://www.eduglossary.org)
- [6] Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). National Policy of Education. (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Abuja: NERDC
- [7] Gerlach, J. M. (1994). Is this collaboration? In Bosworth, K. and Hamilton, S. J. (Eds). *Collaborative Learning: Underlying Processes and Effective Techniques, New Directions for Teaching and Learning* No 59.
- [8] Lunenburg, F. C. & Irby, B. J. (2006). *The principalship: vision to action*. US: Thomson Wadsworth.
- [9] Okogbaa, V. E. (2020). *Introduction to principalship for Nigerian school*. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers International Ltd
- [10] Okogbaa, V. E. (2017). Preparing the teacher to meet the challenges of a changing world. *Journal of Education and Practice* IISTE 8(5).

**International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning**Vol. 8, Issue 4, pp: (1-11), Month: July - August 2021, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

- [11] Plymouth University, (n.d) Sustainability/Sustainability-education. Retrieved from <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/sustainability/sustainability-education/esd>
- [12] Sawyer, J. & Obeid, R. (2017). Cooperative and collaborative learning: getting the best of both methods. In R. Obeid, A. Schwartz, C. Shane-Simpson, & P. J. Brooks (Eds). *How we teach now: The GSTA guide to student-centred teaching*, 163-177. Society for the Teaching of Psychology.
- [13] Vygotsky, L. S. (1934/1986). *Thought and language*. A. Kozulin Revised edition, Boston, MA: The MIT Press
- [14] Wagner, T. (2011). *The Global Achievement Gap*. Retrieved from <http://www.tonywagner.com/69>
- [15] Wilton, N. (2011). *An introduction to human resource management*. London: SAGE Publications limited.
- [16] [www.iisd.org-about-iisd-sustainable-development/](http://www.iisd.org-about-iisd-sustainable-development/)International Institute for sustainable Development