

THE DIVIDENDS, CHALLENGES AND WAYS  
FORWARD IN THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF  
TEACHING IN NIGERIA

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The establishment of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in 1993, was a big boost to the status of teaching in the country. This is because it was the fulfillment of an important criteria required for teaching to get the status of a profession. Since its establishment, the TRCN has been working relentlessly to uphold the teaching profession in the country. Some prominent actions of the TRCN in this regard are: the launching of campaign for the registration of teachers, initiating awareness and organizing continuous training and professional development programmes for teachers and holding regular and consultations with stakeholder and programme partner. With these activities, the TRCN is creating awareness among teachers and even the public of the requirements of the teaching profession. It is remarkable that teachers are responding favourably to the activities of the TRCN. For instance, as at early 2005, more than five hundred thousand teachers have been registered.

With regards to professional development, the Council has organized many continuous training and development activities to enhance the instructional skills of teachers.

As noted by the TRCN–Synopsis (2006:2) the themes for these past continuous professional development programmes (CPDPS) are:

- Ø Mathematics and Sciences
- Ø Technology and Creative Arts
- Ø Teaching in English Language
- Ø Learner –Friendly Strategies
- Ø The Management of Large Classes
- Ø Gender and Child Rights Protection
- Ø Eradication of Examination Malpractices
- Ø NIV/AIDS Prevention and Management
- Ø Drug Abuse and Cultism
- Ø Professionalisation of Teaching

The aim of these CPDPS is to enhance teachers' professional competencies.

Apart from organizing these CPDPS, the TRCN has made the Mandatory continuous Professional Education (MCPE) part of the requirements for the renewal of teachers' practicing licenses. The aim of the TRCN in this regard is not to make things difficult for teachers but to avail every teacher the opportunity for continuous development so as to remain relevance as a professional in the present Information Age. One mark of the Information Age is that developments in information technology (IT) occur at breath taking speed which results in the inundation of knowledge. The consequence is that new knowledge is continuously making existing knowledge obsolete or redundant. The implication is that the knowledge acquired in schools is no longer enough for any professional who wants to be useful and effective in his or her profession. This underscores the need for the MCPE to make all teachers still relevant to the profession.

Though the TRCN has recorded some dividends, there are still some challenges facing the Council in its effort to

project higher the professionalisation of teaching in Nigeria.

## CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Among the challenges facing the professionalization of teaching in Nigeria are attitudinal problems, and the demands of the Information Age.

With regards to attitude, there is need for more effort to be geared towards developing a positive professional attitude among teachers. Even in teacher preparation institutions, student teachers should be made to understand the importance of teaching profession in the society. This will help these student teachers adopt a positive attitude towards the profession. Such attitude includes having high regards for the profession, upholding the teachers code of conduct, desisting from any action that can tarnish the image of the profession and showing in different ways that the person likes and is enjoying the profession.

The first demand of Information Age is ICT literacy. ICT is short for Information and Communications Technology and it refers to all facilities systems and techniques used by human

beings to store, process, communicate and deliver information. ICT encompasses computers, communications equipment such as phone, fax, television, radio, internet etc and the services associated with them. This implies that the word ICT does not refer only to facilities but also to services and techniques. In fact there are three aspects of ICT in the school curriculum. These are: learning about ICT, learning with ICT and learning through ICT. Learning about ICT refers to ICT as a subject of learning in the same way as other subjects such as English, Mathematics, etc. Learning with ICT refers to the use of ICT as instructional media to facilitate teaching and Learning. Learning through ICT refers to learning that occurs while the learner is interacting with ICT. In this information Age, ICT has permeated human activities so much that ICT literacy is a fundamental aspect of being literate. This is because ICT literacy is taken as a key skill alongside literacy, numeracy and language. ICT literacy is the ability to effectively use ICT knowledge and facilities to find things out, develop ideas, communicate and facilitate life activities. With regards to teaching, it refers to the ability to

effectively use ICT to facilitate learning and teaching. The development of ICT literacy is so important in any profession that the European Commission (2003:19) affirms that it is “the first step in professional development.” It is very encouraging to note that the TRCN is already launching campaigns for the promotion of ICT skills and facilities for teachers. Though the development of ICT literacy is the first step in professional development, it prepares teachers for the development of ICT skills, competencies and capabilities which are required for the effective implementation of ICT education. Besides, teachers’ acquisition of ICT literacy is very important because Nigeria as a country cannot join the global competition on the information superhighway if the citizens are not ICT literate. The production of ICT literate citizens requires teachers who are not only ICT literate but who can effectively, confidently and competently use ICT to achieve instructional goals. Such teachers will make it possible for the country to enjoy the many benefits of ICT which include enhanced learning, increased teacher efficiency, poverty

reduction, improved health care, and enhanced national development.

Another challenge facing the TRCN is to help teachers develop the ability of learning to learn. This is very necessary in this information age that is characterized by knowledge explosion. A professional teacher should be ready to present and defend the latest knowledge in his/her area of specialization. This will be possible if the teacher has developed the ability of learning to learn. In this regard the teacher who has learnt how to learn continues to learn and consequently achieves the goal of self reinvention which is one of the necessary conditions for effective professional teaching in the present Information Age.

The information Age also presents the challenge of change in the teacher's position in the instructional process. Fast developments in information technology yield new knowledge at a very fast rate and make such knowledge available to people anywhere and any time to the extent that teachers are no longer the custodians of knowledge. Rather they have to assume the position of managers of instruction, team leaders and co-



learners. In fact in an ICT learning environment, “teachers act more as learning guides or take on the role of learner, tutor, collaborator, developer, researcher, lifelong trainee and team member (European Commission, 2003:9). It is evident that some teachers may find it difficult to assume these new roles of teachers and yet that is one of challenges of the Information Age

Professional teachers also face the challenge of identifying and adopting new instructional strategies. ICT-based instruction does not only imply change in the teachers’ position but also modifications in instructional strategies. Effective implementation of ICT education requires that teachers work with small groups of students at a time, directing and helping each of them to identify and solve problems. Whole- class teaching is still necessary for general introduction of topics but learners are put in small groups to facilitate direction by the teacher. Also emphasis is on learner centered instructional strategies in which there is increase in student control, self-regulation and collaboration with a decrease in teacher direction. Among the common ICT based instructional strategies are role play,

simulation, collaboration and integrative approaches. According to Blurton (1999:9) ICT supports new pedagogical methods that emphasize

critical thinking, problem solving “authentic” learning experiences, social negotiation of knowledge and collaboration pedagogical methods that change role of the teacher from disseminator of information to learning facilitator, helping students as they actively engage with information and materials to construct their own understandings. That is, students learn how to learn, not just what to learn.

These are new pedagogical methods that are based on modern constructivist educational theory and these methods can make it possible for the teacher to engage learners in self-paced and self-directed problem-based learning experiences.

However it is necessary to note that ICT can still support the traditional teaching methodologies such as large group lecture, note taking, etc. It all depends on the teacher’s creative ability. It is necessary to remember that the aim of technology in

education is to enable learners engage in meaningful learning. In this regard Jonassen and Howland (2003:6) state that teachers use ICT to “engage students in active, constructive, intentional, authentic, and cooperative learning”. These are attributes of meaningful learning which learners are expected to possess.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Continuous professional development of teachers is indispensable in preparing these teachers to face the challenges of the Information Age. The TRCN is already doing a good job by

organizing activities aimed at the professional development of teachers. However to ensure that the country has enough competent ICT literate teachers for the development of ICT literate citizens the following recommendations are made:

1. ICT literacy should be a compulsory aspect of teacher preparation programme
2. Serving teachers should be given the opportunity to become ICT literate within a specific time frame.
3. Federal, State and Local Government authorities should ensure the provision of ICT facilities in every school.
4. Every teacher should view ICT literacy as an indispensable aspect of self/professional development and endeavour to achieve that without waiting for any directive to that effect.

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