



The role of research in teacher training and development: Case studies from Nigeria

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The **Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE)** aims to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development. It is led by a group of private donors and donor advisors, including Comic Relief, Dubai Cares, ELMA Philanthropies, Human Dignity Foundation, Intel Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, MasterCard Foundation, and an anonymous donor. Project durations are one to three years, and are located across East Africa (encompassing the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda), India, and Nigeria. Results for Development Institute (R4D) has been selected as learning partner, and will work with three local learning partners to monitor the funded projects, draw out and share important learnings from the efforts, and use these learnings to inform future programming.

The **Education Partnership Centre (TEP Centre)** is Nigeria's pioneer education partnership consultancy, specialising in research, design, implementation, support and evaluation of education programmes, projects and initiatives across the public, private, and non-profit sectors. TEP Centre's vision is to establish radically enhanced education systems by leveraging the strengths of stakeholders for effective and sustainable partnerships. Their mission is to improve the overall design implementation, and evaluation of education initiatives through effective, enduring, and scalable partnerships. TEP Centre serves as the Nigeria local learning partner for PSIPSE.

1. Introduction

The Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) is a funder collaborative that seeks to increase secondary education access and improve learning outcomes for marginalized populations.¹ In Nigeria, recipients of PSIPSE grants are concerned with the quality of teaching and learning in Nigerian schools and a number of PSIPSE grantees use or incorporate research to address some of the identified challenges in teacher development. This report explores the broad context of teacher development, and highlights a number of private and public sector models of teacher training and support currently in operation.

The report begins with the current state and challenges of teacher development training in Nigeria and examines the differences between teacher training in the public and private sectors. It continues by highlighting innovative policies, programs, and actors currently emerging in the field of teacher training and development. The report then analyses two non-state models which are using research as a means to address issues in teacher development; one is a research project and the other a pilot project. The research project is implemented by a team at the *Catholic University of America (CUA)*, which is carrying out a rigorous assessment of the effectiveness of a teacher training program delivered in Nigeria by quality assurance and education organization, QAARDAN.² The pilot project is implemented by the *development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC)* which is working to strengthen the manner in which the new senior secondary education curriculum is delivered to girls at school level. This is done through a combination of research and interventions including teacher training. The report closes by offering the insights that a research-based approach can bring to solving the challenges facing teacher development and training in Nigeria.

2. Teacher development in Nigeria: setting the context

It is generally agreed in the literature that teachers represent one of the most important school-level determinants of learning. In Nigeria, teacher development is central to the four-year strategic plan for the development of Nigeria's education sector (2011 to 2015).³ This policy document views teachers as central to the success of the education system. The national report clearly states, "the quality of any educational system is determined by the quality of the teaching-learning process", and that "teachers interpret and communicate the curriculum to learners."⁴ Despite this central role for teachers however, the report goes on to admit challenges in teacher education and development in the Nigerian education system in the areas of:

1. Pre-service teacher education
2. Orientation and induction of new teachers
3. Continuing professional development for teachers
4. School leadership recruitment, appointment and training
5. Framework for teaching standards
6. Incentives to attract and retain quality teachers

Data on public secondary education in Nigeria affirms that quality at this level of education is generally low. Issues range from high dropout rates to low levels of competence and motivation among teachers. With a primary completion rate of 88.66%

¹ <http://www.macfound.org/press/info-sheets/partnership-strengthen-innovation-and-practice-secondary-education-psipse/#sthash.8x3ZbJoS.dpuf>

² Quality Assurance and Research Development Agency, Nigeria

³ Federal Ministry of Education, (2012) 4-year strategic plan for the development of the education sector (2011-2015), Abuja-FCT, Federal Ministry of Education

⁴ Ibid.

but progression to secondary school only at 43.85%, there is a critical challenge of persistence in secondary education in the country. Public schools are understaffed due to low state budgets and lack of incentives, and learning achievement as evidenced by scores on school leaving examinations, are very poor. Evidence on the teaching competence of public school teachers has brought into sharp profile issues of quality among Nigerian teachers. It has also been found that in-school disciplinary methods commonly used include physical punishment and humiliation, which are not conducive to students' retention at school. Meanwhile, teachers feeling overwhelmed by the lack of resources and low levels of respect for their work, often fall short in understanding their key roles in the educational process and how training can help them improve their professional standing.

While non-state schools in the country are often able to leverage progressive incentive structures to engage and retain experienced and motivated teachers, the public sector is overwhelmed by these factors. Moreover, in addition to these limitations recognized by government, critics of the education system have pointed to other system-level issues including gender imbalances in favor of men in the public education system; the growing dissonance in vision between teacher associations and the government; the unwieldy and complex nature of education bureaucracy and education planning; and the absence of robust open source data to monitor the performance of teacher development policies and financing.

The role of the teacher as a facilitator of the learning process has been extensively explored in literature. There however remains a dearth of conclusive theory on the determinants on teacher effectiveness, and the evidence on the impact of the traditional measures of teacher quality on pupil achievement in developing countries is mixed.⁵ In spite of the mixed evidence however, it has been found that being taught by competent and motivated teachers for a continuous number of years can make up for pupils' socioeconomic disadvantages.⁶ In this regard, teacher supply, motivation and capacity development become important spheres for research exploration. Without sufficient research, it is difficult to ascertain what the issues are, what works in practice of teacher training and how to focus the substantial teacher development funds that are invested by the public and private sectors.

3. Innovations in Teacher Development in Nigeria

In spite of the multitude of challenges that characterise teacher development in Nigeria, there is growing evidence that a number of innovative models of teacher development are emerging, driven by a range of implementers including private sector, donor organisations and the state itself. In the private sector, data from the Center for Education Innovations (CEI) highlights the Corona i-Teach initiative which is focused on producing high-quality teachers. This model recruits and trains young, high achieving university graduates. The model incorporates partnership with international teacher training and certification institutions to enable the trainees, who come from diverse professional backgrounds, to further pursue professional certification in teaching. Through this initiative, Corona School aims to restore dignity to the teaching profession by attracting high quality personnel into the teaching workforce.⁷ The benefits of this initiative are being felt in the schools that recruit Corona-trained teachers. Reports from schools that

⁵ Akinsolu, O. (2010). Teachers and Students' Academic Performance in Nigerian Secondary Schools: Implications for Planning. *Florida Journal of Educational Administration & Policy*. Summer 2010 Volume 3, Issue 2.

⁶ Hanushek, E. and Rivkin, S. (2003). *Does Public School Competition Affect Teacher Quality?* In Hoxby, C. (Ed). *The Economics of School Choice*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press

⁷ <http://www.educationinnovations.org/program/corona-iteach>

recruit these teachers suggest that they are valuable contributors to the teaching and learning process in their schools. It appears that there is value in researching the effectiveness of teachers who have been recruited and trained in this innovative manner, as learnings could further strengthen the program or offer opportunities for scale up.

Donor and bilateral aid funded programmes in Nigeria are also engaged in teacher development. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) for example, funds a number of education sector development programmes which focus on or integrate elements of teacher development. The DfID-supported Girls' Education Programme (GEP3) aims to enroll more girls in Northern Nigeria in school, and encourage teachers to develop functional work-ready students. Another DfID-funded programmes, Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) is strengthening the capacity of six state governments and the federal government to provide access to quality education. These two programmes integrate training and mentoring programmes to strengthen the motivation, capacity and competence of teachers. Another DfID-supported programme, Teacher Development Programme (TDP) is strengthening the capacity of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) to support practicing and trainee teachers in developing high quality pedagogical competencies. The program supports pre-service and in-service training, and is enabling the effective implementation of the revised teacher training curriculum in colleges of education.

The public sector invests in the professional development of teachers through a range of capacity development programmes. One such state-level system is that managed by the Lagos State Government Teachers' Establishment & Pensions Office (TEPO). This office is responsible for ensuring that all state-employed teachers receive a measure of professional development. Also working in this space is the Lagos Eko Secondary Education Project (Eko Project), a public-private partnership between the Lagos State Government and the World Bank aimed at addressing the government's priority for human capital development through grants, performance based incentives, teacher training and testing of students. One of the major sub-components of the Eko Project seeks to establish a mechanism for identifying the training and capacity development needs of secondary schools in order to help schools address the demand for high quality teaching in the core education areas and support the development of teachers' professional knowledge and skills by increasing the capacity of service providers to offer high quality courses in core competencies in the three core-subjects English, Math, and Science teaching.⁸ On average, teachers receive two training opportunities each year. In addition, a Volunteer Teachers' Scheme was established to fill in the gaps in teacher supply, performance of volunteer teachers is reviewed annually and high-performing teachers are retained for continuity. Due to the large scale of state-level teacher development activities, effective integration of research from the programme design phase would present immense opportunities to monitor, evaluate and learn at a macro level.

4. dRPC: Strengthening the implementation of the new senior secondary curriculum in girls' secondary schools Kano and Jigawa States

The dRPC's PSIPSE-supported project is designed to operationalize a government-led innovation in curriculum reform, which has the potential to provide girls with an alternative to early marriage, giving them a bridge to empowerment. The project, which launched in 2012 and will end in 2014, is built around a theory of change which held that successful national level system innovation in the education system must be anchored on

⁸ Source: Lagos State Eko Secondary School Project Report (December 2013)

a system-strengthening model where education planners and teachers in states must be educated on the need for change and the benefits for girls before they operationalize the new system.

While the project set out to achieve the global objective of improving the quality of lives for girls in Northern Nigeria by providing them with empowerment education, specific objectives related to the development of teachers and Ministry of Education officials first had to be articulated and achieved. Of the four specific objectives of the project, two of the most strategic are: 1) To improve the capacity of secondary school teachers/principals to transit from the old to new curriculum with confidence and effective mastery of subject content; and 2) to expand understanding and attitude change to modern education for girls through their improved performance. The project also features key learning objectives and questions: what is the most effective mix of capacity building activities that leads to improved performance of teachers/principals and improved performance of female students?; how does improved performance of girls in WAEC exams contribute towards changing the perception of relevance and value of modern education for teachers, educationists and girls in the two states; and what are the critical factors leading to girls' preference for continuing education and employment over early marriage?

In the first year of implementing this project the dRPC collected baseline and end line data from the first cohort of 3,600 girls, the 90 teachers targeted in 13 PSIPSE schools and girls in 8 control schools. The monitoring and evaluation system generated data which enabled the dRPC to confirm the theory of change which undergirds the project. In PSIPSE schools where 6 cycles of teacher development workshops were conducted for 155 teachers, survival in the education system and performance was found to be greater than in control schools. Teacher development workshops used participatory approaches and focused on technical content of the new curriculum, how to transit from the old to the new curriculum and the use of pedagogy for inclusive classroom learning. But perhaps most importantly, the operational research design of the M&E system points to the fact although in both PSIPSE and control schools there is relatively little difference in girls' desire to complete and continue their education, girls in PSIPSE schools are more committed to learning empowerment subjects and they have a better chance of doing so in the PSIPSE supported schools. This is because teachers in the PSIPSE schools now have better understanding of the new curriculum and a greater commitment to *comply with the innovation by teaching* the new empowerment subjects while teachers in the control schools continued to work within the framework of the old curriculum.

The process of gathering and analyzing data from 155 teachers in PSIPSE schools and 90 teachers in control schools became a project in itself and often led the project team to question the definition of the projects' direct and indirect beneficiaries. However this process provided the team with evidence to confirm the link between investing in teacher development and improved educational outcomes. What the project also teaches is that whilst all girls may have a desire to complete and continue their education the likelihood of them achieving this goal is a function of investment in teacher development.

5. CUA: Identifying what works in teacher training

The Catholic University of America is conducting a Lagos-based research project that analyzes the impact of teachers' training on educational techniques and motivation in secondary school. The project involves the use an innovative integral approach methodology to underline the need of training a new generation. The project commenced in 2013 and is expected to conclude by late 2014.

The substantive issues addressed by this study are: supporting transition to and retention in secondary education, and, reforms to teaching in the formal classroom. In regards to the first issue, the project analyses how training builds community engagement in and accountability for schooling and how it provides mentoring support for learners. With respect to the second issue, it investigates how training teachers on educational techniques and leadership helps overcome the problems of high pupil teacher ratios, reduces teacher absenteeism, and increases teachers' influence on completion and overall achievement levels.

The integral approach to economic development approach deployed focuses on the economic agent's decision process, acknowledging him/her in a holistic manner and in his/her social dimension. To capture that impact, the evaluation contrasts information from teachers who have not passed through the program (control group) with teachers that participated in the program (treatment group). The team is also collecting information on students to assess the impact of teacher training on learning (control and treatment). About 800 teachers, 1,000 students, and 300 parents are participating in the process of data collection. This process entails using 3 different surveys designed to capture in a comprehensive way the factors affecting teaching, learning outcomes, engagement in the educational process and engagement with the broader community, which can benefit or hurt from results achieved at the school level.

The limited literature in this area has identified the lack of adequate training of teachers across different subjects. But in addition to content of course's knowledge or knowing how to present information, teachers in secondary schools also face problems managing the environment in the classroom. Misbehavior occurs frequently in the classrooms and as expected; dissatisfaction among teachers is reportedly high. A study among secondary teachers found that 45.9% would want to quit their jobs.⁹

Initial observations and preliminary data recording show that about 40% of teachers use physical punishment as a disciplinary tool, which points to difficulties in finding proper methods of discipline. Another relevant issue is class participation; over half of teachers report using memorization and dictation as their main teaching methods. These two are key issues to address in order to raise secondary education standards in the country.

The literature has documented the importance of training teachers' improvement in their pedagogical approach. Nevertheless, no previous studies exist in Nigeria about training on teaching techniques and on motivations as key factors to improve secondary education. Thus, this project will greatly contribute to answer the important question on whether training is useful, and if so, to what extent it helps to improve secondary education.

A key challenge in data collection is the unwillingness of some teachers to take part in surveys that are voluntary in nature. Another difficulty is a custom of paying teachers to participate in surveys, which some seem to expect, and which the project cannot accommodate.

Based on initial observations, some preliminary suggestions with policy implications with the goal of improving data collection have been identified: the direct involvement of the

⁹ Ofili, A et al (2009). Psychological Morbidity, Job Satisfaction and Intentions to Quit Among Teachers in Private Secondary Schools in Edo-State, Nigeria, in *Annals of African Medicine*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 32-37.

state ministry of education is critical in facilitating data collection at school level. It may also be useful for the state ministry of education to review a practice which often sees teachers being paid to participate in surveys or other data collection techniques, as this may bias the responses towards “pleasant” or “sought after” answers as opposed to true opinions.

With respect to preliminary reflections based on the ongoing research, a number of suggestions are made: There is need to increase the length of training sessions for teachers, and incorporate follow-up or reinforcement training to create lasting impact among teachers. Testing the impact of increasing the percentage of teachers trained per school (to 50%) can also be facilitated via a follow-up pilot programme. There is also need to regularly monitor trained teachers to ensure that they cascade the training to other teachers at school-level, as expected. Due to its perverse effects on learner morale, there may be value in implementing a pilot program aimed at decreasing the use of corporal punishment as a tool of discipline in the school setting.

6. Conclusion

It is apparent from discussions presented in the report, that Nigeria is facing significant challenges with teacher supply, motivation and competence. It is also clear that the state and the non-state sectors are implementing a range of programmes to address some of the most pressing needs in the teacher development space. Models like Corona i-Teach that focus on attracting the best and brightest to the education sector, are changing the negative perception of teaching, and positioning it as a career path of choice. This model would benefit from rigorous assessment of effectiveness, cost efficiency and impact to date, as well as the potential and appetite for replication or scale-up particularly in the public sector. The donor funded and state-implemented programmes likewise present and immense opportunity for generating deep understanding about what works and what does not work in teacher development. Reflections and emerging evidence from the projects implemented by CUA and the dRPC reveal that research can be a powerful tool to *understand* the contextual realities surrounding teacher development in the country, and to inform both policy and the design of future programming. These projects also present opportunities for learning *how* to meaningfully assess teacher training projects which stand alone or which are embedded in wider programmes. Upon completion of these projects, it is hoped that the evidence generated will serve as a meaningful resource to the state ministries of education as they plan, implement, and evaluate teacher development at state level.