Professional Commitment of Lecturers and Team Teaching in Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

This study investigated professional commitment of lecturers towards team teaching. The study was necessitated by the attitude of most lecturers towards team teaching, it is observed that sometimes, there are as many as six lecturers assigned to one course yet their activities are sluggish and unprofessional towards accomplishing basic educational tasks. Many lecturers seem to be just satisfied with being part of a team in a course without actually contributing to the team work since there are many other lecturers involved. This study therefore carried out a deep research on what constitute professionalism and commitment in team teaching in tertiary institutions and the challenges to achieving professional commitment in teaching. The aim of the study is to expose lecturers to what constitute practicality of professional commitment in team teaching. The study concluded that constant professional development of lecturers aided by lecturers' knowledge of team teaching characteristics will boost professional commitment of lecturers to team teaching. The study therefore suggested among other things that authorities of tertiary institutions should endeavor to encourage lecturers to go for professional trainings by sponsoring them; and lecturers should make conscious effort to imbibe the professional knowledge in teaching and the characteristics of team teaching so as to develop their professional commitment to team teaching.

Keywords: Professionalism, Commitment and Team teaching

Introduction

Teamwork is one of the most noticeable and essential evolution in the 21st century. Humans have been driven to form groups and work together to achieve their goals, solve problems, generate more ideas and skills, among other purposes. Khawama, DiDonab and Hernándezc (2017) viewed teamwork as an approach that has been adopted by many organizations where the tasks are many. The workers work in teams to achieve organizational objectives. In education, teamwork is termed team teaching. Generally, it comprises staff members who may represent different areas of subject, share the same students and have a common planning period to prepare for teaching. Hence, Moss (2017) opined that team teaching is an approach that involves true team work between two or more qualified teachers who work together to make presentation to students. Team teaching is mostly practiced in tertiary institutions due to the vast number of students and lecturers and the large scope of work to be covered.

Tertiary institutions are collection of higher institutions of learning that include; Universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education. It is a place where human minds are trained and knowledge developments are facilitated. It is a community of scholars and researchers, who are keen on improving the quality of existing knowledge or recreating as well as reinterpreting existing social, cultural, economic, scientific or technological findings (Onyeizugbe and Orogbu, 2015). Tertiary institutions, like any other organization relies on its employees who work to stir up the activities/affairs of the organization in order to achieve its objectives and improve organizational performance. Onyeizugbe and Orogbu regarded the lecturers as one of the most important and tangible assets in the tertiary institutions.

Lecturers are teachers and educators who impart knowledge to students in tertiary institutions. Ogogor and Chine (2017) portrayed lecturers as custodians of knowledge in tertiary institutions. They must have excelled in formal education in their different fields which equip them to impart same to their students. Lecturers are committed to continuing education throughout their working lives, hence, they search out and create means of moving education forward. They make researches and write papers. They are not just academic leaders and knowledge boosters but professional teachers. A close look at lecturers' professional functions shows that commitment to team work will likely boost lecturers' professionalism hence, the reason for this study.

Professionalism is the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. It can be depicted as specific rules based on certain level of training, acquired systematic knowledge and skills gained through education, and principles to be followed in job performance (Agu,2014). Agu further explained that professionalism is mastering a specialist, validated and reliable knowledge, demonstrably acquiring the practical skills of the field, being socialized into the culture of the body of the people engaged in the calling and adhering to the principles and ethics of best practice in that profession. This is to say that professionalism is having absolute knowledge of a particular field, possessing and practicing the required skills in that field. Professionalism require commitment because it takes commitment to be a professional.

In addition, team teaching is not likely to be effective without professionalism and commitment and at the same time, team teaching ought to affect professionalism and commitment.

Commitment in the teaching profession is an internal force that drives teachers to invest more time and energy in keeping up involvement in the school. According to Mustafa (2017) this willingness of promoting the school creates emotional link between teachers and the school which ultimately inspires teachers to seek ways to enhance teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment to allow students to reach their targets. However, observation show that many teachers are not committed. Mustafa viewed Commitment as a psychological attachment to an organization in which people give their loyalty to its values and goals. Hence, lecturers' commitment can be seen as the emotional bond lecturers demonstrate toward their work. Unfortunately, this is difficult to see these days in most lecturers. Lecturers' commitment has been recognized as one of the most critical factors in effective teaching as observed by Dang. and Carbvone (2022) that teachers with high level of commitment can make a difference to the learning and achievement of their students. In view of all these, lecturers' professional commitment can be described as the degree to which the lecturer feels devoted, dedicated and loyal to their profession and the school organization. Augustino, Mussa and Muneja (2020) noted that lecturers' professional commitment can be measured in their job performance and professional development. This study therefore intends to examine professional commitment of lecturers and team teaching in these two areas bearing in mind that lecturers commitment to team teaching seem to be questionable.

Conceptual Framework Team Teaching

Teaching and learning require a lot of interaction and communication between the people involved and good activity often relies upon the ability to cross function in other to create a shared understanding of the task, the process and roles of the members. Team teaching is an innovation in teaching that began in 1954 (Anuobi, 2017). It is a well-organized system in which a team of instructors collectively impart instructions to a group of students. Teachers collaborate in teaching the concept; hence team teaching is also referred to as co-teaching or collaborative teaching. It is aimed at working together harmoniously towards a defined goal. Anagba (2021) defined team teaching as a group of instructors working cooperatively to help students and to achieve a set educational goal. Adding to this, Ike (2016) conceived team teaching as a strategy that enable teachers to work together to develop lesson and activities that are effective for all students and then co-teach this lesson within the context of the regular classrooms thereby relieving the teachers overload of lessons. From the two conceptions of team teaching, it can be deduced that the concept of team teaching can be viewed as an organized division of labour among teachers to improve the practice of teaching through collaboration and sharing of their experiences. Hence, Nungsari, Dedrick and Patel (2017) noted that team teaching is a means of improving the quality of teaching, as various experts approach the same topic from different angles: theory and practice, past and present, different genders and different ethnic background, adding that the teachers' strengths are combined and their weaknesses are remedied.

In tertiary, institutions, team teaching is most prevalent because according to Mandel and Elserman (2015) team teaching in tertiary institutions is most needed so as to cope with the large classes, workload requirements and the complexity of delivering multi-disciplinary courses. Mandel and Elserman recognized the following models of team teaching in the tertiary institution:

- While one lecturer instructs the class, the other teachers floats around the class making observation
- While one lecturer instructs, others, move around to assist individual students in behaviour or academic questions they don't understand.
- Station teaching: the class is divided into smaller groups and each group rotate through lessons by each instructor.
- Parallel teaching: the students are split in half and each lecturer teaches the lesson to one half of the students with no rotation of lecturers or students
- Alternative or differentiated teaching: Most of the class receive the same lesson from a lecturer while the smaller group work with another lecturer according to the needs of the students.
- Teaming: this is the collaborative teaching which places equal responsibility for instruction of the large group on each lecturer.

The above are various forms of team teaching practiced in tertiary institutions. Amaechi, Nwachukwu and Onuoha (2019) posited that, team teaching when properly implemented is of significant importance, which brings benefits in terms of increased education quality and growth, competitive advantage and higher educational productivity and performance.

Team teaching therefore aids lecturers' performance. Hence, Howard, Turban and Hurley (2016) opined that at an effective teamwork level, learning becomes easier in comparison to the absence of teamwork and individual performance is improved with enhanced learning. Howard, Turban and Hurley identified some of the benefits of teamwork to include their effectiveness at improving employee relations, employees' technical and interpersonal skills, quality of work life, job satisfaction and performance, organizational effectiveness growth, and flexibility. In the light of this, team teaching as teamwork provides social support, encourage cooperation, and make teaching more interesting and challenging to students.

Professional Commitment of Lecturers in team teaching

Teachers'/Lecturers' commitment has received a considerable lot of attention in educational research because commitment is intimately related to job performance and ability to innovate and integrate new ideas into job practice which is what research is all about. Profession is the work or job one is trained to do and professionalism is the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. It can be depicted as specific rules based on certain level of training, acquired systematic knowledge and skills gained through education, and principles to be followed in job performance. In line with this, Agu (2014) explained that professionalism is mastering a specialist, validated and reliable knowledge, demonstrably acquiring the practical skills of the field, being socialized into the culture of the body of the people engaged in the calling and adhering to the principles and ethics of best practice in that profession.

This is to say that professionalism is having absolute knowledge of a particular field, possessing and practicing the required skills, principle and ethics of that field and being a member of the association of the field. Therefore, professionalism requires commitment.

Commitment is an internal force that drives teachers to invest more time and energy in keeping up involvement in the school. This willingness of promoting the school creates emotional link between teachers and the school which ultimately inspires teachers to seek ways to enhance teaching profession and establish an effective learning environment to allow students to reach their targets. Hence, Mustafa (2017) defined Teachers' commitment as the degree to which the teachers feels devoted and loyal to their profession. Wapmuk, Botsha, Kusa and Goma (2022) updated that, commitment is the attitude of teachers towards their work and have three dimensions: acceptance of the organization's principles and standards, the willingness of employees to do their best and additional effort to achieve organizational goals, and a strong desire to be a member who strongly belongs to the profession. Commitment therefore is a psychological attachment to an organization in which people give their loyalty to organizational values and goals. Teacher commitment has been recognized as one of the most critical factors in professionalism (Okeke, Okaforcha, and Ohamobi, 2017) because it provides physical, mental and emotional connection to one's work.

Professional commitment as it concerns lecturers can be viewed as the emotional bond and attitude lecturers demonstrate toward their work. Ling, Yinhua and Yannan (2022) opined that Professional commitment is the loyalty to profession; desire to stay in a profession and a sense of responsibility towards the professions' particular problems and challenges. Augustino and Musa (2020) agreed that it is the harmony between an individual' beliefs and their determination to continue working in their profession explaining that it is composed of three factors: a belief in the goals and values of the profession, a willingness to make an effort to understand these values and a determination to stay in ones' profession. In the light of these, commitment to profession encompasses three dimensions; as an attitude towards the profession and the work being carried out, as a psychological relationship between the profession and the individual and as emotional reaction to the profession. Therefore, professional commitment of lecturers to team teaching will create an effective learning environment Acknowledging this, Osuala, Onwuagboke and Chukwudebelu (2015) stated that Professional Commitment is a crucial factor in team teaching for high quality teaching and learning. This is because teachers with high level of commitment are in love with all forms of teaching. They have respect for students, constantly look for instructional strategies that will help learners understand better and it is noteworthy that they build strong relationship with their students which is a hallmark of their profession. For this reason, Tengku Shahdan, Ghani and Elham (2012) maintained that lecturers' commitment to team teaching is a motivational force that inspires lecturers to invest more time and energy in students' achievement. Tengku, Shahdan, Ghani and Elham were of the view that commitment of lecturers needs additional efforts which includes spending extra time to make extra classes, guiding students who are involved and attached to long time personal problems, mastering and preparing the lesson plan every semester before they commence, interacting with the students and also searching for other academic materials. They should not only be subject matter experts but are also expected to be good communicators. Hence, Professional commitment of lecturers should be one of the core factors needed in team teaching.

Professional commitment of Lecturers in team teaching and Job Performance

Job performance is commonly used to refer to whether a person performs his job well, but it goes further than the common usage. Job performance is an extremely important criterion that relates to organizational outcomes and success. It is related to activities, attitudes and behaviours towards one's job. Wapmuk, Botsha, Kusa and Goma (2022) defined job performance as an employee's method of accomplishing a task per the organization's stated standards, and it is measured by the level of contribution to the organization's success. Therefore, it is reflected in the quality and quantity of the task, implying that job performance is related to quality and method of teaching. Job performance does not have to be directly observable actions of an individual. It can consist of mental productions such as answers or decisions. However, job performance needs to be under the individual's control regardless of whether the job performance of interest is mental or behavioural. The key feature of job performance is that it has to be goal relevant. Job performance must be directed towards organizational goals that are relevant to the job performance standard.

There are several ways individuals can perform tasks. Shouvik, and Mohammed (2018) proposed an eight factor model of job performance based on factor analytic research that attempt to capture manners in which one can perform a task. They are:

- i. Task specific behaviours
- ii. Non-task behaviours
- iii. Written and oral communication tasks
- iv. Individual's day to day commitment to job in extraordinary circumstances.
- v. Aspect of personal discipline in individuals' job performance
- vi. Playing a good role model, coaching, giving advice or helping maintain group goals.
- vii. Supervisory or leadership component like teaching, meting out rewards and punishments.
- viii. Managerial and administrative aspects of job performance like setting an organizational goal and assisting a group in achieving its goals.

The above ways of performing task show that job performance can be mental, behavioural or intrinsic and may not be directly observable. Job performance can also be simply the production of valid results, in other words employees produce the results expected of them because top performers get job done with amazing ease especially in yeamwork. They are never chased up for results; they just get it done as required of them. Hence, Shouvik, and Mohammed defined job performance as the degree of accomplishment of the task that make up a job. Furthermore, Shouvik, and Mohammed observed that team teaching has great effect on job performance of teachers.

Lecturers' Commitment in team teaching and Professional Development

Committed teachers always seek for continuous professional development. Professionalism is the conduct, aims or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person. It can be depicted as specific rules based on certain level of training, acquired systematic knowledge and skills, gained through education. Hence, Agu (2014) explained that professionalism in education is mastering a specialist, validated and reliable knowledge, demonstrably acquiring the practical skills of the field, being socialized into the culture of the body of the people engaged in the calling

and adhering to the principles and ethics of education. This is to say that professionalism is having absolute knowledge of a particular field, possessing and practicing the required skills, principle and ethics of that field and being a member of the association of the field. In agreement to this, Onyema (2017) perceived the nature of professionalism as: The use of skill based on theoretical knowledge; Education and training in those skills certified by examination. A lecturer therefore is a professional. The designation "lecturer" is anyone who teaches full-time or part-time in tertiary institution; Universities, polytechnics or colleges of education. Therefore, the profession of a lecturer is teaching or lecturing in tertiary institution so lecturers are committed to professional development.

Professional development also refers to the activities aimed at acquisition of new knowledge and skills for effective job delivery. In tertiary institutions, lecturers' professional development is encouraged through re-training programmes, mentorship, seminars, research publications, conferences, symposiums, inaugural lectures, Communication and Technology Gadget utilization and so on (Falola, Osibanjo & Ojo, 2014). These three submitted that professional development is a planned and systematic type of training and activities which is aimed at knowledge creation and the management of such knowledge is to produce better output. Training results in enhanced level of skill, knowledge and competency that are necessary to perform work effectively and efficiently. Therefore, training and development play a vital role in the efficiency of professional development and effective team teaching is a booster to professional training and development.

Professional development of teachers may be somewhat different as scholars approach it from different perspectives, but observation show that they all share a common view that professional development refers to the process through which teachers attain greater professional competence and expand their understanding of themselves, their role, context and career especially in teamching. Le Huong, (2022) opined that professional development of lecturers is any experience that lecturers engaged in to widen their knowledge, appreciation, skills, and understanding of their work in line with goals and values of tertiary education. Hence, it is essential in team teaching.

Theoretical framework

This research work was guided by situational leadership theory. This theory was propounded by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey in 1969. It was first named the life cycle theory of leadership. This theory assumes that the most effective style of leadership changes from situation to situation. This suggests that the leadership style changes depending on the situation at hand. Blanchard and Hersey listed the following leadership changes:

- 1. Coaching leader: the leader focuses on helping individuals build their skills
- 2. Democratic leader: the leader intentionally involves people in decision making.
- 3. Autocratic leader: the leader authoritatively provides direction
- 4. Coercive leader: the leader acts as the ultimate authority

The theory explains why one leader is more effective under certain situations than others. The four principles of this theory are directing, coaching, supporting and delegating. In other

words, the theory proposes that a leader should use these principles for effective leadership which can be coaching, democratic, autocratic or coercive depending on the situation.

This theory was relevant for this study because in team teaching, a group of two or more teachers work together to plan, conduct and evaluate the learning activities which are carried out for the same group of learners. The team of teachers has a leader or coordinator of the team who needs to adopt situation leadership for effective team management that will get the teachers committed. Since the teachers have diverse knowledge and personalities and work as a team, it will help them to reach out to the students with diverse problems or situations. The theory will therefore make the following impact in team teaching: the team's leadership will be flexible, adaptability will be encouraged in the team, it will encourage successful collaboration among team members, it will assess maturity level of the people in the team, it will encourage direction and guidance for the team, it will boost team motivation and it will generally enhance professionalism and commitment through effective leadership of the team.

Challenges of Professional Commitment of Lecturers to Team Teaching

Despite the many benefits and advantages of team teaching, it is not without challenges to teachers. The growing prevalence of team teaching in the tertiary institutions makes managing individual differences of teachers difficult. On the basis of this, Suff and Reilly, (2014) posited that commitment to team teaching is not always successful, pointing out that some teachers are rigid and wedded to conventional method, some simply dislike the other teachers on the team while some don't want to risk humiliation and discouragement at possible failures. Summarizing the problems of commitment to team teaching, Ike (2016) stated that:

- There is a risk of conflict arising between teachers due to the difference in opinion among team members which will affect the efficacy of team teaching
- Since more than one teacher is involved in teaching a group of students, it may be hard to keep track of students' performance
- Each team member has a role to play in the teaching process. Delay in the work of one teacher may have a cascading effect on others' task as well
- It may be challenging for the team members to frame a mutually agreeable lesson plan

Another challenge in professional commitment of lecturers to team teaching is poor professional development of some lecturers. Gomez (2017) listed the following as areas of development needed in teaching professionalism:

- Subject matter knowledge: Increasing knowledge of
 - o the disciplinary basis
- Pedagogical expertise: Mastery of new areas of
 - o teaching, adding to one's repertoire of teaching
 - o specializations, improving one's ability to teach different
 - o skills to learners of different ages and backgrounds.
- Self-awareness: Knowledge of oneself as a teacher, of one's principles and values, strengths and awareness.
- *Understanding of learners*: Deepening

- o understanding of learners' learning styles, problems and
- o difficulties, as well as ways of making content more
- o accessible to learners.
- *Understanding of curriculum and materials*:
 - o Deepening one's understanding of the curriculum and
 - o curriculum alternatives, along with the use and development
 - o of instructional materials.
- Career advancement: acquiring the knowledge and
 - o expertise necessary for personal advancement and
 - o promotion, including supervisory and mentoring skills.

Most lecturers lack the above professional knowledge which is highly needed in commitment to team teaching. This professional knowledge if applied will help the lecturer to attain the right working momentum at the teamwork level. It will also ensure that the newly employed persons are able to easily adapt to their new roles and effectively attain the expected standards of performance. Unfortunately it is lacking in most professed lecturers.

Suggestions on Improving Professional Commitment of Lecturers to Team Teaching

To avoid and curtail the above problems, lecturers should seek professional development which will guide the behaviour of the teammates and keep them focused and on track. Tran, Nguyen, Ho, Bui and Hoang (2020) stated that a lecturer is one who seeks further development through learning, not only with respect to moral qualities but also with respect to subject knowledge and teaching skills. Professional development has become very imperative to lecturers in this era of global competitiveness in tertiary education. Professional development is therefore, seen as "an ongoing process" and an integral characteristic of a fully professional teacher or lecturer. According to Anagha (2021), professional development will make the lecturer committed to the extent of achieving the following in team teaching:

- improving the quality of classroom instruction
- maximizing students' engagement by encouraging interaction and discussion
- making the best use of teachers' experience and expertise
- optimizing the use of educational resources in the institution
- possessing team spirit and conflict management strategy
- instilling a sense of responsibility and ownership among teachers in a group
- ability in grouping students according to their aptitudes and interest.

In line with this, Harris and Jones (2019) advocated that there is need for lecturers to grow, adapt and develop new professional subject knowledge and teaching method/research skills over their career period maintaining that professional development is now regarded as a continuous process that begins during pre-service lecturer training and continues throughout their academic career. It prepares them for their jobs including initial training, induction courses, in-service training within and outside the nation

Lecturers should also be acquainted to characteristics of team teaching. Moses, Wanyeki, Wangari,, Jacklyne and David (2019) enumerated the following as characteristics of team teaching that distinguishes it from other forms of teaching:

- In team teaching, teachers collaboratively plan, organize, teach and asses the same group of students in the class.
- The team can include two or more teachers who can differ in the area of expertise
- They assume various roles such as strategizing, facilitating, analyzing and decision making to ensure effective function
- While planning the lesson, teachers discuss, share insight and choose the right approach to transact
- It is generally designed for a specific group of students. The grouping of students is flexible, based on the level of students
- The strategy allows more discussion and interaction between the students and teachers
- All teachers share in the responsibility of teaching in team. Teachers deploy themselves in specific topics according to their expertise, experience and line of interest

Proper implementation of these team teaching characteristics is dependent on the application of teamwork skills by lecturers which include; communication, responsibility, honesty, active listening, empathy and collaboration with other lecturers (Hanne, 2023). These teamwork skills are the qualities that will allow each lecturer involved in team teaching to rapport with others work well thereby exhibiting professional commitment.

Conclusion

Team teaching is innovative and flexible to accommodate various learning methods, motivate learners, engender sustained and useful classroom interaction and enhance learning in general. Hence, it is viewed as the answer to most problems plaguing teachers, students and administrators especially in tertiary institutions. However, it requires planning, skilled management and above all, willingness and professional commitment of lecturers before it becomes truly effective. In the light of this, the study x-rayed and discussed the professional commitment of lecturers to team teaching as it affects job performance, their development and collaboration with one another.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions, the study made the following recommendations;

- 1. The Federal government in collaboration with education policy makers should make practicable policy that will ensure that every new lecturer is assigned to a senior lecturer for adequate mentoring for professional growth.
- 2. Authorities of tertiary institutions should endeavor to encourage lecturers to go for professional trainings by sponsoring them through TETFUND allocations.
- 3. Lecturers should make conscious effort to imbibe the professional knowledge in teaching and the characteristics of team teaching so as to develop their professional commitment to team teaching.

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