Chapter 41
An Appraisal of a Computer-Based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Course for Nigerian English Teachers and Teacher-Trainers

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ABSTRACT
This chapter is a presentation of a continuing professional development (CPD) programme for English teachers and teacher-trainers in Nigeria using one of the states in Nigeria as a case study. It evaluates the effectiveness of the computer assisted programme, which was part sponsored by the British Council, and concludes that it did not achieve its desired objectives due to a number of reasons. For instance, it was observed that the course content was too loaded for a part-time course. Other reasons for the failure of the programme include absence of internet connectivity, low level of computer literacy, poor power supply and lack of commitment on the parts of both the trainees and the institutions they worked for. The chapter ends with suggestions on how the anomalies observed could be corrected so that computer resources could be used more effectively in the design and implementation of continuing professional development (CPD) programmes for English Language teachers and teacher-trainers in developing countries.

INTRODUCTION
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a term used worldwide to describe many in-service training programmes undertaken by professionals in several fields of human endeavour. It is often seen as an avenue to regularly improve and broaden knowledge and skills, and develop the qualities that are necessary for the execution of their professional duties. It is also about updating people and improving their confidence and competence in the work place. CPD courses, which in the past took the form of workshops, seminars and short courses, now include computer-assisted
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Online courses for obvious reasons (Brown & MacIntyre, 1993).

Professional development could take many forms and shapes, which include single or multifaceted programmes such as short courses & workshops offered after school, weekends and during holidays, is believed to help remove teachers’ anxiety toward computers and enhance greater networking capacities using online technology. The current trend in educational reforms has led to the development of online professional development programs to foster teachers’ application of research-based strategies to improve their skills and capabilities.

The British Council in conjunction with the National Teacher Institute, Kaduna, Nigeria organized a computer-based distance learning program which was captioned Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme in Nigeria. The course was developed especially for Nigerian English teachers and teacher-trainers as a form of educational aid to the country. The course was expected to help improve the quality of English teacher-training which would ultimately rub off on the quality of English language teaching in the country.

Aside from strengthening cultural ties, understanding and trust between Britain and its erstwhile colonies, the British Council plays an important role in the sustenance of the English language as one of the great international languages of the time. This it does through rendering assistance in English language teaching, e-learning schemes such as ‘LearnEnglish Podcast’, exposing foreigners to job vacancies and training opportunities for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). It is pertinent to observe at this juncture that English is used as a second language in Nigeria. Being the country’s official language, the medium of secondary and tertiary education and the language of conducting business in Nigeria is English. The above and many more reasons make the language a vital tool of communication that must be mastered by all who wish to make headway both in Nigeria and the emerging global village.

The aim of this chapter is to present the implementation of the CPD programme in Nigeria, evaluate its effectiveness and make useful suggestions on the use of Computer-based continuing professional development courses in developing countries like Nigeria.

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Computer-based continuing professional development has been made possible through the use of computers and the Internet for an interactive relationship between English teachers and their tutors. The tutor is reduced to a guide or a mediator between the computer and trainees throughout the learning process (Barr & Gillespie, 2003; Fotos & Browne, 2005). Hoven (1999:150) went as far as advocating a learner-centred CALL syllabus. With such a scheme, the learner is placed in control of his/her own language learning. She elaborates further that the learner needs to be in control of the ‘content, mode, order, pace and level of self-direction of the package’ (Hoven, ibid). Since technology has greatly enhanced the ease of language learning within a shorter space of time in comfort and style (Wishart, 2008), the British Council’s intervention in updating the skills of teacher-trainers through computer-based CPD was a welcome development. CPD is not about language teaching per se, but it is also about exposing Nigerian English teachers and teacher-trainers to current methodologies and approaches to teaching English as a Second Language to Nigerian school children.

According to Dede (2006), increasing attention is being given to the role of new information and communication technologies in continuing professional development. Areas of interest include: the use of multimedia to provide structured learning experiences around video-based case studies of