Utilizing P7 as a Model to Facilitate Language Teacher Development Program: Implication for Applied Linguistics

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the imperative need for effective language teacher production in Nigeria to meet the growing demand for language education and applied linguistics. The study introduces the P7 Model, a comprehensive framework that encompasses seven key elements essential for successful language teacher development: Personnel, Potentials, Partnership, Process, Property, Product, and Probing. The research involves a survey of 400 practicing language teachers across various educational levels in Nigeria. The survey examines their perceptions regarding the importance of these seven elements in shaping language teacher education programs. The findings are analyzed using simple percentages. The results highlight strong agreement among respondents concerning the significance of each P7 element in the language teacher development process. Specifically, participants emphasize the need for competent, proficient, and enthusiastic teaching staff (Personnel), collaborative efforts through partnerships, research, and engagement with regulatory bodies (Partnership), admission of candidates with a genuine interest in language teaching and strong academic potential (Potentials), a curriculum emphasizing practical skills and employability (Process), the provision and optimal use of infrastructure and resources (Property), job security, remuneration, incentives, and continuing professional development (Product), and quality assurance and control throughout the teacher development process (Probing). The P7 Model offers a structured approach to guide language program administrators and policymakers in shaping effective language teacher education programs. Prioritizing these elements is crucial to ensure the availability of skilled, dedicated, and enthusiastic language teachers who can meet the demands of the 21st century, ultimately facilitating applied linguistics and language education in Nigeria.

Keywords: applied linguistics, language teacher, P7 Model, production, teacher education

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Nigerian education in the 21st century is tailored towards providing equal opportunities for all citizens to acquire knowledge, skills, and values that will make them sound and effective citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). Languages – indigenous mother tongues, Arabic, English, and French – are school subjects right from the primary education level. But these languages cannot be taught where there are no teachers. The language teacher is the key implementer of language education reforms and innovations as well as the manager of the language classroom. Given that the top-bottom approach is prioritized in language program administration in most cases in Nigeria, language teachers are only active at the implementation level. Even in other climes, their participation is

restricted while the criteria of effectiveness and efficacy are imposed by the regulatory bodies (Sánchez, 2007). However, language teacher production [and supply] is the basis for meeting the rising demand for language teachers. Language teacher production is the output of language teacher education. Language teacher education can be initial or continuing. It is a conscious and deliberate effort at exposing prospective (at the initial stage) and practicing (at the continuing stage) language teachers to content knowledge (the language arts), pedagogical knowledge (the principles and practice of education), pedagogical content knowledge (language teaching methods) and by extension technological knowledge (integrating technology in language teaching) thus strengthening their proficiency to guide learners to grasp the rules governing the use of language and also use the language appropriately in different contexts. Applied linguistics in its narrow sense is described as the act of language teaching. But then, applied linguistics is slippery when subjected to description.

Applied subjects at the university and advanced levels of education can be classified into two incongruent types (Groom & Littlemore, 2011). While the first is concerned with the practical applications of a single branch of academic knowledge, the second does not have 'pure' or 'theoretical' equivalents and thus focuses on a single (and broad) practical domain. Existing reality reveals that applied linguistics is regarded as a discipline and has in a sense assumed the status of a course or area of study in institutions of higher learning. However, the perspectives – convergent and divergent – from where it is defined have left a lot of people in a state of confusion concerning what applied linguistics entails and signifies. This is given the fact that two central groups exist as far as the definition of the discipline is concerned. While one of the groups provides a narrow definition of the discipline, the other provides a broader definition. Suffice it to say that some of the definitions did oversimplify the discipline whilst others made it look so complex. It is the narrowness or broadness of a set of definitions that provides the basis for the scope of applied linguistics which in essence shapes people's orientation concerning the camp to belong concerning what applied linguistics is.

When applied linguistics came into existence in the second half of the twentieth century (1950s) as a postgraduate qualification, its primary focus was mainly language teaching with particular emphasis on the learning and teaching of second or foreign languages (Davies, 2007; Groom & Littlemore, 2011). In fact, before the 1980s, the major priorities of applied linguistics were restricted to problems and puzzles associated with language pedagogy, learning, and acquisition (Simpson, 2011). Then, postgraduate students of applied linguistics were only taught courses like curriculum, syllabus and materials design, language teaching methodology including language testing, classroom management, etc., and the language arts. Today, some institutions teach a course of studies in 'mainstream' linguistics like phonology, morphology, syntax, lexis and semantics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, etc. (sometimes with particular emphasis on their classroom implication) in addition to curriculum, syllabus and materials design, language teaching methodology including language testing, classroom management in the applied linguistics program. But then, applied linguistics has undergone a significant change in the recent past (Groom & Littlemore, 2011).

At present, there is a consensus among scholars who view applied linguistics from the broad perspective that, applied linguistics uses findings from theoretical studies of language and other fields of study to solve or ameliorate real problems of the real world arising in different domains of practice (Davies & Elder, 2004; Sánchez, 2007; Widdowson, 1986). Thus, applied linguistics is in principle and practice a problem-driven discipline, rather than a theory-driven one (McCarthy, 2001). Given this, applied linguistics mediates between theory and practice (Simpson, 2011). The problems applied linguistics attempts to solve are found in three broad thematic areas viz.: language and education; language, work, and law; and language, information, and effect (Cook, 2003). Consequently, the hitherto narrow scope of applied linguistics, concerned with language teaching and learning, has now expanded to

cover a much wider range of theoretical and practical concerns. Despite the wide coverage of applied linguistics, language pedagogy remains by far the largest area of research activity in contemporary applied linguistics, and it is envisioned that this to remain the case even in the foreseeable future (Groom & Littlemore, 2011).

Another tradition within linguistics which is often confused with applied linguistics is called *Linguistics-Applied* (L-A) seldom tagged "applications of linguistics" (Davies & Elder, 2004). This version is currently evident given the fact that theoretical linguistics has shifted from a narrowly formalist concern to a consciously socially accountable role around translation, codification, corpus planning, lexicography, etc. But then applied linguistics is not linguistics applied because it investigates a plethora of thematic areas that are not necessarily purely linguistic because disciplines such as biology, economics, philosophy, politics psychology, sociology, ethnography, anthropology, and cultural studies, computer programming, educational research and experimental design, communication, and media studies, etc. also inform applied linguistic research even though an overwhelming majority of applied linguists see the academic discipline of linguistics as their nearest neighbor and a critical source of intellectual inspiration (Groom & Littlemore, 2011; House, 2016).

It is apposite to underscore that linguistics is in principle studied in a progression of the structure of language, called code, beginning with the smallest units of language to the largest, and the transition from emphasis on scientific descriptions of language-to-language use in context is widely understood as a shift toward applied linguistics and its derivatives (Razfar & Rumenapp, 2014). As such, at the broad level, an applied linguist is seen as a Jack of all trades and a go-between, not an enforcer, and a servant, not a master (Wei, 2014). This is because, in the course of solving real-world problems, the applied linguist explores a lot of options from different disciplines. But then, even though applied linguistics is not only an applied field but also an interdisciplinary one, it is not fragmented (Simpson, 2011). Furthermore, as consultants, the applied linguist only analyzes the real-world problem and provides advice on the feasible solutions for the client to adopt the suitable option. Thus, the applied linguist serves to meet the needs of the client.

A cursory observation of areas the applied linguistics is concerned with will reveal the following: additional language education (second-language and foreign-language), advertising, arrangement and presentation of written language, bilingualism and multilingualism, clinical linguistics, critical discourse analysis, discourse analysis, first-language education, forensic linguistics, language policy and language planning, language testing, lexicography, linguistic ethnography, literacy, psycholinguistics, rhetoric, sociolinguistics, stylistics, translation and interpretation, workplace communication etc. Of interest in this study is the narrow definition of applied linguistics which relates it to language teaching and learning – additional language education (second-language and foreign-language) and first-language education. Additional language education (second-language and foreign-language) and first-language education cannot be effective where there are no language teachers.

A language teacher is a person who guides learners toward absorbing and externalizing the declarative and procedural knowledge of a particular language. Traditionally, the home and the community play a significant role in providing the learner with the acquisition of procedural knowledge of their first language (Olaofe, 2013; Olaoye, 2007). Even though formal 'Western' education started in Nigeria in 1842, the production of advanced profile teachers that could conform to the needs of modern Nigeria was not prioritized until the 1960s when some Advanced Teachers' Colleges were established from 1962 to 1968 in Lagos, Ibadan (now in Ondo), Owerri, Zaria, Kano, and Abraka (Isyaku, 2005). At the degree level, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka was the first to start a concurrent degree program in education. Before the establishment of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the University College, Ibadan was running a one-year Post Graduate Certificate (Diploma) program in

Education (Ukeje, 2004). The Ibadan program is now a consecutive teacher education program. With the promulgation of Decree 3 of 1989, the Advanced Teachers' Colleges metamorphosed into uniform and more standardized colleges of education that are mandated to award the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) which is at present the minimum academic requirement for one to be certified as a teacher (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Teachers Registration Council, 2004).

This study contends that the language program administrator should, in the course of producing language teachers to ensure language teaching, consider seven variables called *P7*. P7 as used in this study stands for the key components that drive teacher production. It is made up of seven variables that start with the letter P. These variables are germane in the production of language teachers. The variables are Personnel, Potentials, Process, Property, Product, Probing, and Partnership. The model underscores that once these variables are synchronized in language teacher production, the result will be the availability of competent, conscientious, and enthusiastic language teachers.

METHOD

This study adopted a survey as a research method. The survey can be effective when the concern of the researchers is to systematically collect data from a target population to establish the level of agreement and disagreement with particular propositions, the frequency of certain behaviors, knowledge and awareness of events, etc. (Hammond & Wellington, 2021). The population of this study is all practicing language teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria. There is no data concerning their exact number. Indicatively, they are in thousands. Given that the researchers cannot access all of them, 400 language teachers were purposively sampled as participants for this study. It should be noted that questionnaires can be used to ascertain the perception of participants about a certain phenomenon in quantitative research (Rasinger, 2018). As such, 400 copies of a 28-item researcher-made questionnaire P74LTDP were administered to the participants. It is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that attempts to establish whether participants agree or not that for teachers to be made available for applied linguistics (language teaching), the language teacher education program should integrate personnel, partnership, potentials, process, property, product, and probing.

The questionnaire was validated by experts in language education and applied linguistics and subjected to a reliability test via test-retest method on 40 language teachers drawn from the 17 local government areas in Yobe State during the 2021 Teacher Development Programme conducted by the Yobe State Universal Basic Education Board. A correlation coefficient of 0.95 was realized after analyzing the data collected by the mean of the Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient. As such, the questionnaire was adopted and administered to participants at Benue State University, Makurdi, Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto and language teachers in Yobe State in 2022, and some participants at the Strengthening Teacher English Proficiency Master Trainers' workshop held in Kaduna and the annual national conference of the English Scholars Association of Nigeria held in Lagos in 2023. The data collected were analyzed using simple percentages. Table 1 presents the responses of participants to each of the items on the questionnaire, while Figure 1 presents the rates of participant responses according to agreeing or disagreeing with the questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings
Table 1 presents the responses of the participants to each of the items on the questionnaire.

Table 1. Questionnaire responses

S/No.	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
	PERSONNEL					
1	Adequate teaching and non-teaching staff can ensure effective language teacher development	307	70	23	0	0

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S/No.	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
2	The proficiency of the teaching staff is the determinant of the quality of their output in the language teacher development program	74	298	1	27	0
3	The enthusiasm of the teaching and non-teaching staff to deliver service can ensure an effective teacher development program	179	218	0	3	0
4	The willingness of the personnel to absorb and share innovation in language teacher education can ensure an effective language teacher development program	193	201	6	0	0
	PARTNERSHIP					
5	Collaboration around staff exchange and staff development can ensure an effective language teacher development program	271	128	1	0	0
6	Research collaboration can ensure an effective language teacher development program	178	213	2	7	0
7	A partnership can attract endowments and grants that can ensure an effective language teacher development program	203	195	2	0	0
8	Partnership with regulatory bodies can ensure an effective language teacher development program	291	109	0	0	0
	POTENTIALS					
9	The candidates to be admitted for the language teacher development program should have an aptitude for learning language and pedagogy	316	72	12	0	0
10	The candidates to be admitted for the language teacher development program should have an interest in language teacher education	303	89	8	0	0
11	The candidates to be admitted for the language teacher development program should have a sound mind and good character	387	13	0	0	0
12	The cut-off mark for the candidates seeking admission into the language teacher development program should be high	7	224	26	106	37
	PROCESS					
13	Content delivery in the language teacher development program should be geared towards boosting the employability of the graduates	379	20	1	0	0
14	Emphasis should be placed on the practical application of knowledge and communicative competence rather than theory and declarative knowledge in the language teacher development program	351	43	6	0	0
15	Content delivery should emphasize inculcating the language arts and pedagogy deeply and broadly in the potential of the language teacher development program	361	39	0	0	0
16	Micro-teaching and teaching practice should be prioritized in the language teacher development program	352	48	0	0	0
	PROPERTY					
17	The adequacy of classes and lecture halls can ensure the effectiveness of the language teacher development program	312	73	12	3	0
18	The adequacy and utilization of language laboratories and information technology centers can ensure the effectiveness of the language teacher development program	83	206	78	29	4
19	The adequacy and utilization of micro-teaching laboratories can ensure the effectiveness of the language teacher development program	67	191	74	59	9
20	The adequacy, quality, and utilization of library holdings in the fields of languages, language teaching methods, and the principles and practice of education can ensure the effectiveness of the language teacher development program	372	28	0	0	0
	PRODUCT					
21	Job security can attract the products to language teaching	76	315	9	0	0
22	Good remuneration, incentives, and job satisfaction can make the products to be retained in language teaching	309	89	2	0	0
23	Continuing professional development can strengthen the proficiency of the products in language teaching	373	27	0	0	0
24	The language teacher development program should guide the products to potential employers	34	251	14	51	50
	PROBING					

| S/No.	Item	SA	A	U	D	SD
25	The teaching and non-teaching staff, as well as the potential learners, should be quality assured before they are selected for the language teacher development program	308	92	0	0	0
26	Content delivery and assessment should be quality-assured during the language teacher development program	309	91	0	0	0
27	The adequacy and effectiveness of the infrastructure and book holdings should be quality-assured during the language teacher development program	309	91	0	0	0
28	Employers' ratings of the products of the language teacher development program should be accessed and assessed to ensure quality control in the language teacher development program	72	281	39	6	2
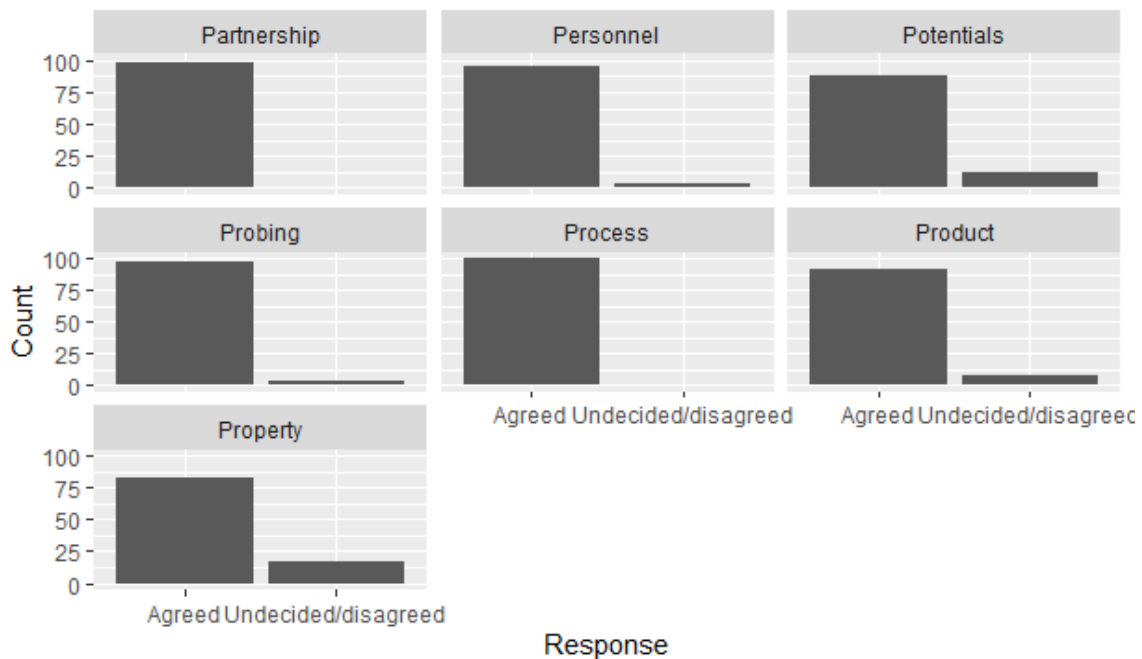
Figure 1. Rates of responses based on agreeing or disagreeing with the questions

Discussion

As shown in Figure 1, thousand five hundred forty (1540) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of personnel in language teacher development programs, representing 96% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that adequate, proficient and enthusiastic teaching and non-teaching staff and their willingness to absorb and share innovation in language teacher education can ensure effective language teacher development program. Sixty responses, representing 4% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents were undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

Personnel are the teaching and supporting members of staff involved in teacher education. The teaching staff and their activities do have an impact on language teacher production. According to Ukeje (2004), the teaching personnel in the teacher education program should not only be adequate but must be cerebral. This is apposite because low-level facilitators of language teacher education cannot render timely, transparent, and value-added service in the program. This necessitates utilizing language teacher educators who are up-to-date and thus capable of meeting the dynamics of the system in such a way that they will be able to synchronize changes in the language teacher education curriculum and methodologies with the demands of the 21st century (Okokoyo, 2006).

One thousand five hundred and eighty-eight (1588) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of partnership in language teacher development programs, representing 99% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that collaboration around staff exchange and staff development, research, endowment and grants

seeking as well as a partnership with regulatory bodies can ensure effective language teacher development program. However, 12 responses representing 1% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents were undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

The recruitment and the on-the-job development of the teaching personnel in the language teacher education program should not be exclusively done within the language teacher education institution. This therefore calls for partnership. Consequently, the employer of the language teacher trainer must liaise with other institutions that produce teacher trainers to ascertain the competence of the candidates recommended for the job. There is a need for research, staff development, and staff exchange collaboration between the language teacher education institution and cognate institutions, research centers, institutes, philanthropies, and grant-making organizations. The language teacher education institution should also identify and partner with the schools where the prospective teachers can be adequately mentored during their teaching practice/practicum. In addition, the language teacher education institution must partner with regulatory bodies including matriculation and selection boards to assure the quality of its services. In addition, there is the need to partner with the media and secondary schools to sensitize secondary school students and attract them to the language teacher education institution thus helping in branding the institution.

One thousand four hundred and eleven (1411) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of potentials in language teacher development programs, representing 88% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that the candidates to be admitted for the language teacher development program should have an aptitude for learning language and pedagogy; interest for language teacher education, sound mind, and good character, and made to obtain high cut off marks to gain admission into the program. However, 189 responses representing 12% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents are undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

The potentials are the prospective language teachers and the language teacher who is ready to continue language teacher education. The potential must be deeply interested in language teaching, of adequate language aptitude, and educable. This becomes pertinent because such would help in branding the language teaching profession and by extension applied linguistics. Where the previous antecedent that the language teaching profession is the exclusive reserve of the never-do-well subsists, it would adversely affect the teacher production efforts. This agrees with the position of Balarabe (2006) which suggests that prospective teachers must be of good aptitude. Language teacher education would be a source of pride when the potential to undergo the program is of proven academic excellence when compared with their peers studying other courses. The language teacher education program should be branded for the appreciation of the secondary school student and leaver.

One thousand five hundred and ninety-three (1593) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of process in language teacher development program, representing 99.6% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that content delivery in the language teacher development program should be geared towards boosting the employability of the graduates and inculcating the language arts and pedagogy deeply and broadly in the potentials. They also agreed that the process should emphasize the practical application of knowledge and communicative competence rather than theory and declarative knowledge in addition to prioritizing micro-teaching and teaching practice. However, 7 responses representing .4% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents were undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

The process involves the actual language teacher training. However, the personnel and potentials alone cannot make language teacher education a success unless there is a purpose. The purpose would give shape and impetus to curriculum planning and implementation. The curriculum adapts to societal needs as such it must be flexible to accommodate change. It should be designed to enhance the employability of the graduate of the language teacher

education program. At the point of implementing the curriculum, the facilitator of the language teacher program should emphasize the inculcation of practical teaching skills and communicative competence as well as 21st-century skills through the curriculum rather than memorization of concepts, theories, and rules. In doing this, the facilitator of the language teacher development program should allow the potential to express and project their knowledge and skills in a way that their strength would be underscored and their weakness minimized. Thus, practical teaching or teaching practice/practicum should form part of the process. This will make the potential drink from the fountain of the experiences of veteran language teachers in the schools they have posted for the exercise. Teaching practice will not only provide the student-teacher with the opportunity to learn – given that we learn when we teach – but also allow them to participate actively in the cluster in-service language teacher development programs readily available in such schools. Being a program for high-flyers, the process gives the potential adequate opportunities to absorb content, pedagogical, technological, pedagogical content; and technological and pedagogical content knowledge broadly and deeply (Ehiozuwa, 2005).

One thousand three hundred and thirty-two (1332) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of property in language teacher development program, representing 83% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that adequate classes, lecture halls, language laboratories, information technology centers, micro-teaching laboratories and library holding and their effective utilization can ensure the effectiveness of the language teacher development program. Conversely, 268 responses representing 17% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents are undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

The process cannot be effective where the inputs readily available are only the personnel and the potentials. Therefore, there is a need for the provision of property. Property is an amalgam of all infrastructures – products, services, and facilities – that must be made available for an institution to function (Nwafor, Uchendu & Akani, 2015). These include physical, research, and instructional materials. Thus, the language teacher should ensure the availability of adequate lecture rooms, theatres, halls, language laboratories, information, and instructional technology centers, micro-teaching facilities, adequate book and journal holdings, office accommodation, etc. Thus, a critical variable that the language teacher development program should underscore is the adequate provision of resources, their maximum utilization, and appropriate management to avoid wastage (Dangara, 2016).

One thousand four hundred and seventy-four (1474) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of product in language teacher development program, representing 92% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that job security, good remuneration, incentives, and job satisfaction can attract the products to, and retain them in, language teaching. In addition, they agreed that continuing professional development can strengthen the proficiency of the products in language teaching and admitted that the language teacher development program should guide the products to potential employers. Contrastively, 126 responses representing 8% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents are undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

Using the property to facilitate the process will lead to the actualization of the product. The product is the person who has undergone and passed the language teacher education program. In consequence, the person is ready to be utilized in teaching language and literature. To maintain the shelf-life of the product, there is a need for the recruitment advisor in the language teacher education institution to partner with potential employers to attract them to language teaching and retain them in the system. Furthermore, the capacity of the language teacher should be strengthened through continuing language teacher education on the job or off the job. This entails partnering with mentors, resource persons, facilitators, and language teacher training institutions to help the product to be up-to-date on language,

literature, and teaching methods. The moral of the product should be kept high through adequate remuneration and incentives that would assure job satisfaction and job security.

One thousand five hundred and fifty-three (1553) responses from the four items that elicited responses on the place of probing in language teacher development program, representing 97% of the responses to the items, indicated that the respondents agreed that the teaching and non-teaching staff, the potential learners, content delivery and assessment, and the infrastructure and book holdings should be quality assured in the language teacher development program while the products should be quality controlled via their impact and employers' ratings. Contrastively, 47 responses representing 3% of the responses to the items indicated that respondents are undecided on, or disagreed with, the items.

Probing is necessary in the entire process and after the product has been actualized. Probing entails quality assurance and quality control. The input and process must be checked for quality, appropriateness, and adequacy while the product should be quality controlled to inform decisions that will enhance the language teacher development program.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the demand for both formal and non-formal language education in Nigeria remains steadfast. This persistent demand underscores the critical necessity to increase the supply of qualified language teachers in the education system. Prioritizing the training and production of language teachers is crucial to effectively promote the field of applied linguistics. Neglecting this priority could result in a significant mismatch between the number of available language teachers and the ever-growing population of language learners. In light of these considerations, this study proposes a comprehensive model known as "P7," comprising seven essential components: Personnel, Potentials, Partnership, Process, Property, Product, and Probing. These elements collectively form a blueprint for the systematic production of language teachers. It is worth noting that the principles of partnership and probing play a central role in all seven components. This is because the quality and success of a language teacher education institution are intricately linked to the caliber of its graduates. When language teacher education institutions fail to recruit qualified personnel, compromise their admissions criteria, or provide inadequate resources to support the educational process, the consequences are reflected in the quality of the teachers they produce. Subsequently, this shortfall in quality can lead to a decline in the institution's reputation and credibility. Ultimately, a failure to prioritize these critical elements, particularly partnership and probing, can result in detrimental effects on the overall landscape of language education in Nigeria.

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