

TEACHER EDUCATION AND PRACTICE IN NIGERIA: PROSPECT AND CHALLENGES.

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Abstract

Every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens, because of the realisation that education is necessary to engineer and consolidate any nation's developmental process. However, achieving quality education would be a mirage if teacher education is not in good shape. This paper examined the historical development of teacher education in Nigeria, the purpose of teacher education, the present position of teacher education in Nigeria, the role and attributes of a good teacher and the need for professionalisation of the teaching profession. Moreover, an important thrust of the paper hinges on the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria which include inadequate funding, poor societal perception of teacher education; lack of commitment among teachers; problem of attrition in teaching; lack of motivation and unethical behaviour of some teachers. Based on these challenges, it was therefore, recommended, as the way forward, that teaching profession should be truly professionalised; public should develop positive perception of teachers; the curriculum of teacher education needs to be reviewed in conformity with global trends. It was also recommended that there should be improved welfare package for teachers. The government, as well as, other stakeholders should ensure that befitting infrastructures are put in place to enhance better teacher education programme.

Introduction

Education can be regarded as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potential and all kinds of rights and powers. The increasing awareness of the importance of education to the uplifting of the individual and societal standards has awakened in people and nations a conscious effort at devoting their meager resources to acquiring qualitative education. Balogun (2010) opined that education is the light, without which, the whole world would be in darkness. It is the basis of scientific and technological breakthroughs and the basis of modernity, which have made all nations of the world accord immense priority to it, even though, the levels of priority range from one country to another. The success of an educational enterprise particularly, in terms of quality, depends to a very large extent, on the regular supply of teachers in adequate quantity and quality. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) asserts that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self – sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. However, what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available in the system. According to Ibukun (2004), the quality of human resources in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of the effectiveness of educational programmes.

In order to achieve any socio-political, economic and scientific development in a country, there is the dire need for qualified teachers who are equipped with the desired knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, and who are empowered to perform their tasks. The National Policy on Education gave credence to this, when it asserted that, no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence, there is the need to always appraise the nation's system of teacher education with a view to ensuring adequate supply of quality teachers, to man the various levels of the educational system in the country. This paper therefore, examines the history of teacher education in Nigeria, the challenges of teacher education and the ways of ascertaining the good prospects of teacher education in Nigeria.

Origin of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The idea of teacher training took its root from the need to train people to lead the missionary crusade of propagating the gospel during the early Christian missionary era (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2002). The first teacher training college was founded by the Christian Missionary Society in Abeokuta in 1859. It was known as the "Training Institution". There were some hostilities in Abeokuta in 1867 that led to the expulsion of the missionaries from the town and that made the training institution to be moved to Lagos to become an arm of a Grammar School. However, the establishment of St. Andrew's College Oyo in 1896 signaled a very important landmark in the training of teachers in the country. The pioneering efforts of the C.M.S were strengthened later by other missionary societies. For example, the Baptist Mission founded the Baptist Training College at Ogbomoso in 1897. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society opened an institution to train catechists and teachers in Ibadan in 1905 with four pupils (Ajayi and Ayodele, 2002). Obviously, the business of teacher education started mainly as an exclusive missionary business. Durosaro, (2006) posited that before independence, there were few secondary schools in the country with the bulk of their teacher expatriates and missionaries, most of whom had no teacher education.

Shortly after independence, there was a sporadic increase in enrolment in teacher training colleges owing to greater competitions in schools establishment among missions.

The establishment of more schools then, made the demand for teachers to increase drastically. By and large, the teacher education curriculum then was geared towards the primary school teacher education only. A major event in the development of teacher education in Nigeria was the publication and implementation of the Ashby Commission report. The Ashby commission reported that there was an inadequate supply of trained teachers in the nation's secondary schools even while there was an increase in the demand for more secondary schools. The Ashby commission, among other things, recommended the training of more teachers for the nation's secondary schools, the establishment of more universities and establishment of the institution of a Bachelor's Degree in Education, where qualified teachers could be produced. B.A. and B.Sc. (Education) degrees with fifty students were first introduced by the University of Nigeria Nsukka, in 1961. University of Ibadan followed suit in 1963; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria 1964; University of Lagos in 1965 and Obafemi Awolowo University Ile – Ife in 1967.

Today almost all the Universities in the country have Faculties of Education where qualified teachers are produced. There is no doubt that teacher education is a veritable tool towards educational development. This fact was given credence to by the National Policy on Education when it stated that Teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all

educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The policy emphasized that all teachers in the nation's educational institutions from pre-primary to University, would be professionally trained. The policy also stated that the purpose of teacher should be:

- a) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- b) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- c) To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives
- d) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation, not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world and
- e) To enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2013).

Position of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Durosaro (2006) remarked that the teacher education in Nigeria today, is much improved than it was before 1970. The author claimed that the type of teachers needed in Nigeria have become clearly defined in the National Policy on Education implementation committee blue print. It was prescribed that types and qualification of teachers required should be as follows:

- a) Pre-primary education: Grade II teachers with NCE teachers as head.
- b) Primary education: NCE teachers with graduates as heads
- c) Junior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates.
- d) Senior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates with professional qualifications.
- e) Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education: University graduates with post-graduate qualifications in their disciplines together with professional qualifications, practical industrial exposure and experience.
- f) University: University graduates with post-graduate qualifications together with professional qualifications and experience. The government had taken some steps to ensure the implementation of the prescription which stipulates NCE as the minimum qualification for teaching in primary schools in the country. The steps were that; all existing Grade II Teachers' Colleges are being phased out and serving Grade II Teachers are being retrained to obtain NCE before the deadline to disengage them. In furtherance of this, the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) was established with the mandate of mounting in-service training programmes through Distance Learning System for serving teachers.

Concept of a Teacher

A teacher is described as the professional, who imparts knowledge, learning experiences at his disposal to stimulate, guide, direct and facilitate learners to acquire adequate mastery of the skills

being imparted. Ajayi, (2004) defined a teacher as someone who causes learning to take place; someone who imparts knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to a group of learners. From the definitions, it is clear that a teacher is one who helps the learners often in a school, as well as in a family, religious and community setting. Learning cannot take place without the teacher, even though he is not physically present; he is indirectly represented by the medium through which learning takes places. According to the provisions of Teachers' Registration Council Act (2004), teachers are categorized into four main classes namely:

- A – Class: Holders of Ph.D. in Education or Ph.D. in other field plus Education (i.e. PGDE)
- B – Class: Holders of Masters Degree in Education or Masters Degree in other field plus Education (i.e. PGDE)
- C – Class: Holders of Bachelors degree in Education or Bachelors degree in other field plus Education (i.e. PGDE).
- D – Class: Holders of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) or equivalent.

The provision of the TRC Act emphasized that, 'holders of the TC II and equivalent shall be given provisional registration which shall terminate at the end of 2006.' This suggests that the minimum NCE requirement as the baseline for teaching in Nigeria had started since 2006.

It is in realisation of the critical attributes of the teacher and the crucial role they perform that the Federal Government of Nigeria had taken steps towards professionalisation of teaching and teacher registration to sieve the "weeds from the tars" (Durosaro, 2006). Professionalisation of teaching implies that teaching would be like Medicine, Law and some other professions where the codes of ethics are the guiding principles and are strictly adhered to. This suggests that any person who would be licensed to practice the job must be professionally trained, certified and licensed for practice as obtained in other recognised professions. Professionalism is the most primary and fundamental need of any vocation that wishes to deliver qualitative service to society, and as well, have its members well respected and remunerated.

Attributes of a Good Teacher

Various authors have submitted that a good teacher has a lot of attributes that singles him/her out among his/her contemporaries. According to Bandele (2000) and Ajayi (2004), a good teacher must be brilliant and clever, creative, diligent, disciplined, friendly, firm, and forceful, good looking, godly and gentle. Other attributes of a good teacher according to the authors include humility, innovation, integrity, magnanimity, neatness, responsibility, punctuality, simplicity, reliability and radiance. Above all, a good teacher must be academically qualified, that is to know what to teach, whom to teach and appropriate method to teach the subject matter. In summary, these attributes make a teacher a model to learners and an embodiment of exemplary citizenship, integrity and industry in the society.

Role of a Teacher

The teacher is an important factor in the quality of education in any nation. They are the last post to translate government policies and intentions into practical form. A teacher performs a number of functions in the school system to facilitate effective teaching and learning.

According to Adepoju in Ajayi and Ekundayo (2010) the functions of every teacher include: explaining, informing and showing how; initiating, directing and administering; unifying the group, that is, making students to relate to him and others very well; giving security; clarifying

attitudes, beliefs and problems; diagnosing learning problem; making curriculum materials; evaluating, recording and reporting; enriching of community activities; participating in school activities; and participating in professional and civil life. The roles of a teacher as stipulated above suggest that the teaching exercise is a 24-hour service. Thus, Ajayi (2004) emphasized that for teachers to perform their functions effectively the school environment must be made conducive to learning by all stakeholders.

Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teachers form the hub of the education process. It is in this context that teacher education becomes a matter of great concern. The challenge facing the teacher education system in Nigeria appears herculean, prominent among these are:

Inadequate funding

Inadequate funding of the education sector has been a major challenge facing the sector. Researchers such as Aina (2002), Durosaro (2006), Amadi (2007) and Balogun (2010) lamented over the inadequacy of funding in the education sector. It is not an understatement to note that the Nigerian government, over the years has not been meeting the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. According to Akindutire (2001) the poor funding of the teacher education since the 1980s has become a cause of worry to educationists as it affects the merits and standard of the certificates awarded to education graduates.

Poor society perception of teacher education

Another formidable problem of teacher education in Nigeria today is the lack of interest on the part of the secondary school leavers in the teaching profession, because of the poor image associated with the status of teachers in the society. According to Durosaro (2006), the low status accorded to teachers in the country, does not make students enroll and be trained as teachers. The few who enroll do so because they have no choice.

Lack of commitment

It is no understatement to observe that most teachers nowadays are not committed to the teaching job. Ajayi and Shofoyeke (2003) posited that a number of interrelated factors like poor income, delay in payment of salaries, lack of job satisfaction contribute to the seemingly declining attitude and commitment of teachers to their professional calling. The lack of commitment manifests in the areas of lack of enthusiasm to work; lack of concern for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; inadequate preparation for lessons; failure to write lesson notes; careless handling of statutory records among others.

Problem of attrition

There is the problem of attrition in the teaching force and dwindling enrolment of teachers. The teachers' conditions of service are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best of brains in the profession. Besides, Ajayi and Shofoyeke (2003) claimed that the continued uncomplimentary public perceived image of teachers may not likely attract the right calibre of people to be retained in the teaching profession. Today, there are holders of professional qualifications in Education serving in the banks, customs departments, hotels, immigration, and airways to mention but few.

Teachers and role conflicts

It been observed in recent times that some practicing teachers in the education system have divided loyalty to the profession, because of their involvement in some other assignments outside the teaching job. Observations have shown that some teachers are full-time politicians. It appears that those that engaged in this kind of divided loyalty do so in order to make both ends meet. However, this tendency jeopardizes the progress of the profession.

Teachers and professional ethics

Teaching as a profession, has its ethics to guide members in the discharge of their duties. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) in the Teachers' Manual stipulated, as one of the ethics of the teaching profession, that teachers shall not reveal examination questions, either internal or

external to anyone, and in marking examination scripts; they shall be fair to all students. They shall, in addition, not condone or connive at examination malpractices. However, it has been reported that teachers often succumb to the pressure of the lazy students and desperate parents to engage in examination malpractices both internal and public examinations.

Teacher Education and Curriculum Development

A major challenge to teacher education in the present dispensation is that of globalization. The world is gradually becoming a global village and for teachers to have currency and operate effectively and efficiently in the nearest future, the teachers need to embrace the new technologies and methodologies of the advanced countries of the world.

The Way Forward

Despite the enormous challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria as earlier discussed, a lot can still be done in order to enjoy the multi-various benefits abound in teacher education. The following are suggested:

True Professionalisation of the Teaching Profession

It is necessary to play politics with the professionalization of the teaching profession. By professionalisation, the code of ethics will be respected and the profession will not be open to every Tom, Dick and Harry. In making a professional teaching qualification mandatory, government should make it compulsory for all in the teaching jobs, at all levels, to acquire teaching qualifications.

Positive Perception of Teaching

For teacher education to get its pride of place in this democratic dispensation there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The profession must be recognized by the government, as well as, the public to be able to attract young ones into the profession. Akindutire (2005) lamented that Nigerian schools are staffed with unenthusiastic, ill-motivated, reluctant and “burn-out” teachers. How will teachers be motivated to work when a Local Government Councilor earns better pay than a university professor? When teachers’ salaries are not paid at the appropriate time? No wonder a lot of people use the profession as ‘a stepping stone’ towards getting a better offer that earns better public recognition.

Needs for Curriculum Overhauling

For the teacher to keep abreast of the goings in the world and in his area of specialization there is the need for the teacher to be ICT compliant. The teacher education curriculum needs to be reviewed so as to incorporate ICT at all levels of teacher education.

Improved Welfare Packages

Motivation for teachers should be considered as a means of improving output and productivity in the school system. Welfare package does not mean increase in salary alone; it entails regular payment of salary and improved conditions of service. The following are the hints on how to improve conditions of service: teachers with relevant additional qualification should be appropriately upgraded; teacher can transfer from one state to another without loss of status; capacity building for teachers at no cost; special incentives for teachers facing different environmental challenges in their places of work and regular payment of allowances and leave

bonuses. Prompt remittance of all deductions from their salaries. All these would enhance increase in productivity of teachers.

Befitting Infrastructure in the Schools

There is also the need for improvement in the level of the infrastructural facilities in schools. This, however, depends to a large extent, on the level of funding made available to the system. Ibukun (2004) advocated for modern educational gadgets like computers, modern instructional materials and packages to be consciously introduced into the teacher education programme. It must be noted that no programme, no matter how well intended, can succeed if adequate infrastructural facilities are not provided for implementation.

Teacher's Self-image to be Improved

Teachers are advised to show high level of dedication and commitment to their job. They should demonstrate good sense of responsibility in carrying out their duties. Regardless of the magnitude of societal negative attitude to teachers, they must not deviate from their traditional role of modeling and nation-building, hence, they must stick to the ethics of the profession.

Improvement in the Academic and Professional Training of Teachers

More time should be provided for practical work before students are certified as teachers. There is the need to review upward the twelve weeks of internship for education students in the university. To provide sound teacher education in future, the present curriculum needs to be reviewed so as to provide more time for students in the practical aspect of teaching before certificates are awarded to them as qualified teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The quality of education in Nigeria has been a source of concern to all stakeholders in recent times. It has been observed that there is poor quality of products from all levels of the education system. It is accepted that teachers constitute the most important input in the system that determines the quality of output, more important than the amount of resources on ground. If the teachers in any nation are not committed, not inspired, not motivated, and are lazy, immoral and antisocial, the entire nation is doomed. Teacher education is what makes the difference between a teacher and a cheater in the job. Therefore, if Nigeria must re-engineer her economic, political and social systems, a great deal of thought must be given to the inputs and management of teacher education. This presupposes that improvement on teacher education is invariably, a way to improve the general productivity of the economy. It is recommended that if the suggestions as spelt out in this paper are strictly adhered to, there will be an improvement in teacher education programme in Nigeria.

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