

TEACHER EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: A VIABLE ROUTE TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This paper is focused on teacher education in Nigeria in a Global context. It identified the inadequacies in the teacher education programme in the country presently and it looks at the concept of globalization and its challenges, stressed the need for quality in teacher education; especially in areas of dysfunctionalities. Then finally, recommends the internationalizing of teacher education programme and development of strategies for incorporating the global perspective into teacher education.

Introduction

The teacher constitutes the second most important input in any educational system, after the learners. Without efficient teachers in the educational system, quality-learning outcomes cannot be achieved. Since teachers initiate learning, they need to be adequately prepared for teaching. This is why the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004) asserts that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Ukeje (1991) further supports this assertion that the teacher is the nut of any educational system. This is because schools cannot be better than their teachers. It is upon their quality and devotion to teaching that the effectiveness of any educational system can be tested. These statements above lend credence to Afe (2001) Assertion that the educational system will not; be modernized until the whole system of teacher training, stimulated by pedagogical research, made intellectually richer, more challenging and extended far beyond pre-service training into a system-for continuous professional renewal and career development for all teachers.

The need to ensure adequate teacher preparation would be better appreciated when one considers the fact that educational objective, no matter how well stated, could be rendered useless by inefficient teachers. It is in this vain that this paper examines teacher education in Nigeria with global perspective. Teacher education in Nigeria has been grappling with numerous problems for years without tangible solutions. Problems like low mode of entry, inadequate facilities and equipment, limited subject specialization, unbalanced evaluation devices, haphazard conduct of teaching practice exercise have continued to be major national concern in teacher education. Since professionals and writers are pointing to globalization as the panacea to many worlds problems, this paper discusses these issues and suggests ways that they could be tackled through globalization. If the benefits of globalization enumerated by Nwagbara (2002) are realizable, there is hope for solution of these problems. The benefits included create of wealth for people and nations propagation of local culture, spreading of ideas, news and information and creation of wide range of wide range of markets across borders thereby making foreign goods and services easily available to distant societies of the world and at cheaper rates.

Globalization ant! its Challenges

Globalization is a trend that encapsulates the growth of connections between people on a planetary scale. Globalization involves the reduction of barriers to trans-world contacts. Through it people become more able - physically, legally, culturally, and psychologically to engage with each other in "one world". Adesanya defines it as the process by which enterprises related or unrelated become interdependent and inter-linked globally through strategic alliances and international network. This is why McGrew, as cited by Adesanya, described globalization as the "forging of a multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world system.

Global connections take many forms. For instance, jet aero planes transport passengers and cargo across any distance on the planet within a day. Telephone and computer networks effect

near-instantaneous interpersonal communication between points all over the Earth. Electronic mass media broadcast messages to world audiences. Countless goods and services (such as Mercedes Benz and Toyota cars as well as Bank transactions) are manufactured and transacted through trans-world processes. In some cases, different stages of production are located at widely dispersed locations on the Earth. The US dollar and the Euro are examples of savings and credits that have global circulation.

Globalization is not entirely new. As a trend, historians have attempted to date the onset of globalization, it is clear that the process has gained an unprecedented scale in contemporary history. Most manifestations of global connectivity have seen most of their growth during the past half-century. Take for instance, the recent spread of jet travel, satellite communications, the internet, television, global retailers, global credit cards, global ecological problems and global regulations. For instance, the world count of radio receivers rose from fewer than 60 million in the mid - 1930s to over 2,000 million in the mid- 1990's the society today is more global than that of any earlier time.

The consequences of globalization have been enormous. The most direct impact is, perhaps, changing the boundaries of social relations; however we shall be concerned more with implications for economics, politics, culture and education since it is critical for national development Babarinde (2001).

In terms of economics, for example, globalization substantially alters the organizations of production, exchange, and consumption. Many firms "go global" by setting up affiliates across the globe. Many enterprises also form trans-world alliances with other companies. Countless mergers and acquisition occur as business adjusts to global markets. Questions of competition and monopoly can arise as a result. Again, Corporations relocate many production facilities as globalization reduces transport and communications cost. All these economic restructuring have serious implications for employment, labour conditions, poverty and social cohesion.

With regard to politics, globalization has made significant impact on the conduct of governance. Territorially based laws and institutions through local, provincial, and national governments are not sufficient by themselves to regulate contacts and networks that operate in trans-world spaces. In other words, globalization stimulates greater multilateral collaboration between states as well as the growth of regional and trans-world governance arrangements like the European Union and the United Nations.

In relation to culture, globalization disrupts traditional relationships between territory and collective identity. The growth of trans-world connections encourages the rise of non- territorial cultures, for example, on areas of age, class, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. Arising from all this, identity tends - especially for people who live more globalize lives - to become less fixed on territory, in terms of nation - states and ethnic bonds. Again, in as much as multiple cultures , become densely intertwined in supra-territorial flows, globalization encourages more hybridity, where individuals develop and express those a mix of identities. At the same time, other people -- including those with less, or no opportunity to participate in global relations react against globalization with defensive nationalism. In these various ways globalization calls the nature of community to question.

In education, globalization has found expression in rapid expansion of information super-highway popularly called internet. Internet is simply internetworking. It means establishing links between two or more computers. Internet is a medium of global electronics communication. It is a super network linking thousands of computers networks around the globe, all supporting a common pool of telecommunication protocol. In many parts of the world, it is an indispensable tool for business, education research, commerce, and technology development. It is a better way of sharing information among people with similar interests around the world. The internet has brought people with similar interests around the world. The internet has brought people .closer together with new knowledge, which has become a vital tool for taking daily decision. The more remote areas have all been linked by the communication system through technological advances in cyberspace, in the computer and telecommunication.

The Need For a Comprehensive Teacher Education Programme in a Global Context

The National Policy on Education (2004) states that "Teacher Education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because it is the ultimate in any educational system. It further listed the goals of teacher education as follows:

To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of

our education system;

- ✓ To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers,
- ✓ To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- ✓ 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
- ✓ To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), was to be entry qualification into teaching. With these laudable objectives it would be expected that only the intellectually promising and qualified persons should be trained as teachers, it would also be expected that the products from teacher education should demonstrate academic competence as they carry out their teachings. But unfortunately many of them cannot make simple correct sentences let alone write good lesson plans in their area of specialization.

Obara (2001) opined that teaching is (he most vital and strategic profession for national development. No doubt, without good teachers there can be no good engineers, no good medical doctors, no good lawyers, indeed without good teachers and good educational systems, we invariably have unimaginative and unpatriotic engineers with roads that will wash away after the first rains, doctors that will kill more than cure, incongruous law and purchased justice. According to Ngada (2003), the cumulative effect of incompetent teachers would be non - development rather than development and a times national retrogression instead of progress and development.

Indeed the importance of qualitative teachers and teacher education cannot be over emphasized. In comparing the importance of teaching profession with other professions, Ukeje (19⁹¹) said If a doctor makes a mistake, a patient may die, if an engineer makes a mistake, his client may lose his liberty but if a teacher makes a mistake, it will affect generations yet unborn. All arms of development of a nation depend solemnly on the nature of its teachers at all levels of institutions of learning.

Madueke (1997) said that since national development has a direct link with education and the teacher translates educational policies into practice, it follows, that the education of the teacher should be the priority of any country wishing to develop in all branches of human endeavour. If it is accepted that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that education is the catalyst for all spheres of human development, then it follows that a country that operates poor quality education will purposely remain undeveloped and thus suffers from the consequences of under development. Globalisation may provide the solution to lack of quality teacher education and save Nigeria from the present situation.

The State of Teacher Education Nigeria

The areas of deficiencies indentified in teacher education in Nigeria are as follows:-

i. Mode of Entry: This is one of the most serious problems plaguing teacher education programmes in the nation. The NCE programmes in Colleges of Education draw their intakes from less bright Secondary School Leavers who would in no way gel admission into other tertiary institutions because of poor academic qualifications. The few above average students found in educational institutions are there because they had no admission somewhere else not because they had education as their first choice. It is worse-with the universities. It is after other degrees had satisfied their quota that Education will release its own admission drawn from students, training is made quite difficult especially when one considers the fact that many of .such students cannot communicate clearly in the official language of instruction.

ii. Lack of Funds: This manifests itself in inadequate facilities and equipment Fund is a pre-requisite for all activities and the success of teacher education in Nigeria. Meaningful projects cannot be exected. Infrastructures and materials continue to be inadequate. Ngada (2001) identified lecture

halls, classrooms, laboratories, hostels, staff quarters, generating plants, office equipment as being inadequate in most teacher producing institutions. This is more pronounced in State owned Colleges. It is not better however in federal institutions where ratio of students to materials is always inadequate. This is more pronounced among students of science, technical, and Business education. It is common to have over 1000 students using only 30 -40 typewriters or 30 to 40 computers according to Ngada (2001). A classroom capacity of not more than 50 students will be jammed with over 200 students. Most science laboratories are not equipped with chemicals so that practicals are far fetched. Most science graduates of College of Education can neither titrate nor identify salts and these are graduated to teach sciences in the Secondary Schools. Science and technology today have produced new devices in teaching methodology. Modern technology teaches the use of computer with internet, video conferencing and teleconferencing and even the over head projector in teaching. These devices are not employed to teach the trainees because of lack of funds. The question is, how can these trainees be able cope up with these devices on graduation? The funniest aspect of this predicament is the system of borrowing facilities during accreditation to fool the assessors. The borrowed materials are returned to their owners as the members of the accreditation

iii. Limited Subject Specialization

This is especially in the NCE programme where the trainee are trained in two basic teaching subjects. The National Policy on Education (2004) had stated that the Nigerian Certificate in Education is the minimum entry teaching qualification in the nation. This means that the teachers for the primary schools should be NCE teachers. A teacher in the primary school teaches all subjects to the pupils. It means the NCE teacher is inadequate for the primary school system,

iv. Haphazard Conduct of Teaching Practice Exercise

Teaching practice is a cardinal aspect of all teacher education programmes. According to Ololobou (2003), it is through it teacher trainees operationalise all the theoretical knowledge they have been exposed to in the lecture halls. In the first place the period varies from institution to institution. It ranges from a period of two to six weeks except for long vacation programmes where Teaching Practice is up to twelve weeks. The period is too short for the student to be prepared before releasing him into the school system. Afe (2001) argued that the supervision of this programme is another area of inadequacy. Some students are visited only once and some twice. Hardly has there been a situation where a student is held behind because of poor performance in teaching practice.

v. Proliferation of DLS and Long- Vacation Programmes:

Distant learning and long - vacation teacher training programmes are run in various teacher training Colleges and some University Faculties of Education. The modes of operations of these programmes have nothing to be desired. The students are rushed and some important aspects of the training such as pure laboratory works, practicals, excursions, are left out. The mode of entry is worse in this program than in the regular programmes. From all indications, it seems these programmes are organized for financial gains rather than for training well motivated proactive teachers.

vi. Imbalance and Evaluation Devices by Teacher Educators.

Anikweze (1995) decrying the poor conduct of continuous assessment practices in teacher education in Nigeria, observed that during the teacher training programme, teachers in training are only assessed in the students assessment are incomplete compared with the minimum standards for training teachers, these student teachers when in service are expected to assess their students in the three domains; These are the result of ineffectiveness found in Secondary School teachers today .in continuous assessment.

The implication of all these deficiencies is that all other sectors of the nation are affected. The National Policy On Education (1998) declared that Education is an instrument par excellence in achieving national development. For any educational system to be qualitative enough to be a tool for national development purposes, the quality of teacher education must be very high. Currently, instead of excellence in the nation, there is poverty, unemployment, moral decadence and collection of individuals who cannot form positive, self- concepts, self- realization and actualization. That is why the

nation must look beyond for solution and globalization seems to be the panacea.

Suggested Solutions Through Globalization

i. Internationalizing Teacher Education:

Nigerian Teacher Education should link up with international bodies charged with teacher education. There is need for international exposure by forming partnership with bodies like American Association of Christian Teacher Education (AACTE). This body fosters development of a global perspective in teaching and teacher education; promotes the use of this perspective in decision -making within the Association, Member institutions and related constituencies. It also develops activities with a global international focus for members, encourages the network of interested members in conjunction with special studies on global and international Teacher Education. For instance, this body had conclude an international study on preparing teachers around the world, comparing and contrasting teacher education and certification policies in United States, Australia, England, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Netherlands and Singapore. In their last annual conference, discussion was on what represents a globally competent teacher educator and papers were presented on globalization and its implications in education and teacher education. Nigerian educational System will benefit much by belonging. Another body is comparative and international education society (CIES) based in Michiga.

ii. Development of Strategies for Incorporating the Global Dimensions in Education from other Countries:

Globalization is built on knowledge and information. Rebuilding an effective knowledge base in Nigeria should be a priority. Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education in the Universities should be revitalized. The nation's abundant resources should be utilized to provide adequate infrastructures, computers Internet and other technologies so that new ideas and methodologies across nations teacher education can easily be assessed. There is the need to put Nigeria Teacher Education on the path of competitiveness and strengthen it to participate favourably within the global system. -

iii.. Policies:

Partnership with foreign counterparts will provide Nigeria Educators the framework for defining the globally competent teacher educator. This will include policies on admission, curriculum, the teacher evaluation procedures, including the teaching practice. The aim of such global politics is to make the products of Nigerian teacher educators internationally competitive and acceptable. With globalization, a teacher trained in Nigeria should compete very well in any nation of the world.

iv International Researches:

The universities should conduct international studies to compare and contract teacher education and certification policies round the world and make,, their findings available to Nigeria Teacher Educators. This will encourage good indigenious practices, and imbibe ,goods foreign practices.

Conclusion

This paper examined teacher education in Nigeria in a Global context. It identified the inadequacies in the teacher education programme in the country presently and stressed the need for quality in teacher education; especially in areas of dysfunctionalities, such as, low mode of entry into teacher training institutions, inadequate facilities and equipment, limited subject specialization, inadequate evaluation devices and poor accreditation procedure. It finally recommends the internationalizing of teacher education programme and development of strategies for incorporating the global perspective into teacher education. If adopted, this would lead, not only to the production of globally competent teachers but also to global accepted standards in all our institutions of learning in the country.

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