

SKILLS ACQUISITION IN TEACHER EDUCATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

Teachers hold the key to modernization and the transformation of the society. Unfortunately, the Nigerian Teacher Education programme appears to be lagging behind in the production of quality teachers needed for social, economic, political, moral, technological growth and development of the nation. Though efforts were made by the Nigerian government to curb the problems of low teacher quality, the situation appears to worsen daily. The low quality of teachers has adversely affected the standard of education in Nigeria. This paper therefore looks at the teacher education programmes with emphasis on teacher preparation in Nigeria, basic teaching skills and competences required of any teacher, problems facing skills acquisition in teacher education programmes and prospects. Recommendations were made as ways of solving the identified problems.

Introduction

Teachers perform the role of converting human resources to human capitals needed for the development of the society. The teacher is the critical figure in the process of guiding the learner to develop in him critical thinking ability, ideas and knowledge. The teacher lays the moral foundation on which good citizenship is built and hence, is the foremost architect in national building (Imaobong 2004:2). In the views of Majasan (1995), teachers are the leaders of all the other participators in the upbringing of a refined generation and the most potent factor in organizing the process involved. It is upon the teacher that the social, economic, political and technological development of the nation hinges. To buttress this fact, Ejiogu (1997) and Fafunwa

(1992), opined that many developed countries like USA, Britain and Japan placed high premium on their education programme in recognition of the relationship that existed between teacher and national development.

In recognition of the role of teachers in national development, the National Policy on Education (NPE) revised (2004), it was stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of her teachers. As succinctly put by Ukeje (1993), the quality of education provided in any society and the nature of change effected by the education are both dependent on the quality of teachers and the effectiveness of their teaching in school. It is therefore the objective of this paper to examine skills acquisition in teacher education, the problems and prospects. To achieve this objective, the following issues are examined:

- i. Teacher preparation in Nigeria
- ii. Basic teaching skills or competences required of any teacher
- iii. Problems facing skills acquisition in teacher education programme
- iv. Prospects.

Teacher Preparation in Nigeria

The Nigerian teacher education programme is aimed at preparing teachers to acquire teaching skills both in content and pedagogy so as to enable the teacher to meet up with the demands of teaching. UNESCO (2002), defined teacher education as the training of persons who are directly responsible for the education of pupils or students. Teacher preparation therefore, requires giving consideration to important characteristic features that would enhance the teaching effectiveness of

the teacher, hence such variables like the teacher's perception, attitude, conditions under which they learn and specific skills to be acquired by teacher are paramount

In the NPE, it is stated that the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is the least entry qualification into the teaching profession. The objectives of teacher education in Nigeria includes:

1. Provision of teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignments.
2. Provision of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers, for all levels of the educational system.
3. Enhancing teachers commitment to teaching profession.
4. To make teachers adaptable to changing situations.
5. To encourage further the spirit of creativity and inquiry in teachers.

All teachers are to receive professional training at College of Education, Faculties of Education of Universities, Institutes of Education and National Teachers Institute (NTI).

Teacher preparation is therefore critical for the production of quality teachers who impacts significantly on teaching effectiveness and academic achievement of students. In the views of Morrow (2003), students chances of learning will increase significantly with well-prepared teachers.

Basic Teaching Skills

A skill can be defined as the ability to do something which is acquired by training, while acquisition is the gaining of something for one self (webster 1995). Skill acquisition therefore is the ability of an individual acquired through training which enable the individual to effectively carry out a function for the benefit of self and mankind.

The teaching effectiveness of any teacher is predicated on the acquisition of core skills or competences by the teacher. For quality teaching aimed at sound and balanced education of learner for useful living within the society, such skills or competences should spread through the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. According to Asiyai (2008), teaching skills are the specific teacher behaviour systematically designed to help the classroom instruction become effective and meaningful in the teaching and learning process.

The teaching skills include:

1. **Effective Classroom Teaching:** The Federal Ministry of Education in Ingwu arid Ekefre (2006), defined effectiveness as the extent to which the goals or objectives of a school programmes are accomplished. Thus, effectiveness can be seen in relation to the quality or equality of educational instruction given to learners. It is a measure of the degree to which in a school setting, the inputs , produces desired outputs. In the views of Anikweze (2004), effectiveness is the extent to which the teachers behaviour indicated by his teaching style, produces expected outcomes in the learner. The teacher should be competent in teaching even in terms of pedagogy. He must exhibit good knowledge of the subject matter and utilize such knowledge in the manipulation of teaching skills. This knowledge of subject matter is reflected in the teachers ability to write clear and meaningful lesson notes daily.

2. **Classroom Management and Control Skills:** The teacher must be competent in classroom management and control during instruction. The ability of the teacher to manage and control the classroom effectively from the beginning to the end of a lesson is of utmost importance in assessing teacher effectiveness. The teacher must be skilled in controlling external factors that influence attention and convey the competence in subject matter and his ability to teach. Meaningful teaching and

learning directed at the achievement of objectives cannot not be realized in an unconducive classroom characterized by different behaviour problems of students. He should be competent in the utilization of various classroom management techniques to maintain decorum during instruction.

3. Enhanced Reasoning Skills:

The teacher should possess an enhanced reasoning ability which leads to better understanding of situations. This reasoning ability fosters in the teachers' analytical and systematic problem solving and thus, develop constructive critical mind. The teacher must be skilled in fast reasoning and decision making.

4. Creative Imagination Skills: Igborgbor (2006); defined creativity as the art of devising and implementing new and better ways of doing things and thus, contributing to the development of the society. Effective teaching requires the acquisition of imaginative and creative skills by the teacher. Imagination and creativity are the dual qualities on which hinge the functional efficiency of the professional qualified.

The teachers' ability to bring new ideas into the new lesson, visualize, foresee and generate ideas are measures of creativity. The degree to which a teacher invests his imaginative talents into his teaching, depend on his creative thinking skills. When a teacher exercises creative imagination, it will lead to creative efficiency in the teaching making the learning process exciting, interesting and meaningful.

5. Variety and Resourcefulness Skills:

Variety and resourcefulness are important teaching skills. For effective teaching, the teacher should use variety of teaching techniques to manage the classroom interaction. He should be able to vary the teaching methods and strategies to meet the needs of the individual student. The teachers' resourcefulness is reflected by his ability to employ various strategies while delivering the lesson to make the lesson interesting to the students and thus,

enhance their understanding of the topic taught. The teacher is the most important catalyst in any educational venture. The teacher acting like a catalyst, speeds up any reaction leading to better understanding of concepts by students. He does this by the introduction of appropriate teaching aids and variety needed to make students eager or enthusiastic to learn. The use of appropriate examples, planned repetition, relevant stories and teaching aids accelerate learning by students. 6. **Knowledge of Subject Matter:** Lassa (2000) believes that the knowledge of subject matter is a major skill to be assessed of an effective teacher. An effective teacher should exhibit sufficient knowledge of subject matter in his area of specialization. This is reflected by his ability to make the lesson meaningful to students, teach the topics effectively following systematic procedures, provide enough and relevant teaching aids, utilize good questioning techniques, make appropriate chalk board summary and evaluate instruction.

Problems Facing Skill Acquisition in Teacher Education

Teacher education in Nigeria is bee hived by a lot of problems which seems to militate against the acquisition of teaching skills and competences among teachers. These problems include the followings: i. **Inadequate Funds:** The inadequate mobilization of fund from diversified sources vis-a-vis the failure to prioritize the use of available funds for areas of urgent need like infrastructural and instructional facilities, equipment, teacher education and wasteful spending were problems confronting teacher education in Nigeria. The issue of poor financing have been a biting one in Nigeria. Funds are not readily available. The lack of funds make it difficult for school administrators to organize workshops for training and re-training of teachers to enhance the acquisition of teaching skills and update knowledge.

ii. **Inadequate Infra structural and Instructional Facilities:** Inadequate infrastructural and instructional facilities have been a problem plaguing the education industry in Nigeria at all levels. Teacher preparation institutions are dotted with dilapidated infrastructures and instructional facilities like well equipped laboratories, libraries, text books and furniture needed for quality teacher preparation. The inadequacy of educational facilities amidst over-crowding in schools hinders meaningful teaching and learning. iii.

Poor Conditions of Service: Poor conditions of service is a constraint against teacher education in Nigeria. Often time, the academic calendar is disrupted as a result of strike actions by the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT). The incessant strike action is linked with poor conditions of service of teachers due to irregular payment of salaries and allowances, stagnation, lack of infrastructure, over-stressed facilities, delayed implementation of payment of Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) and general unconducive school environment e.g unwholesome office, poor common room and lack of Information Communication Technology (ICT). It is not an over statement to say that the Nigerian teacher is the least motivated. Earlier study by Asiyai, (2008) revealed that the good school environment, good condition of service and employment status of teachers influence the effectiveness of teachers

iv. **Lack of Teacher Commitment:** The lack of commitment on the part of teachers is a problem of the teacher education programmes in Nigeria. Most of the teachers are not committed to the teaching job. This situation appears to hinder the acquisition and exhibition of teaching skills amongst teachers. However, Ingwu (2004) posited that the efforts a teacher puts into teaching is governed by the level of training he possess. Besides, commitment by an individual to organizational effectiveness is associated with the rewards attached to his performance. Teacher

commitment to the teaching profession is very critical for quality teaching and learning. Nwachukwu (1997) lamented that a profession that offers no job security when he is either retrenched or recruited without much preparation is bound to produce disorganized work orientation and poor work attitude. The low nature of entry, certification and exit in and out of the teaching profession is a major instigator of divided attention and non-committed attitude.

Prospects: To improve teacher education adoption of Developmentalist Teacher Education Model would be appropriate. This model was propounded by Nwosu (2002). The model is an educational philosophy and political ideology to stimulate, energize and drive the national endeavors in education. The approach is appropriate for the incorporation of skills and knowledge needed for national development. The Developmentalist Teacher Education Model has the following Objectives:

- (1) Production of teachers who see the teaching- learning process as a strategy for solving societal problems, poverty alleviation, job creation, wealth creation, cultural and political harmony, promote personal development of learners and the overall socio-economic development of the local and globalized state.
- (2) Produce teachers for all levels of the educational system who would be highly competent in their areas of specialization and can effectively use their function to promote the advancement of their discipline and profession, national development and international understanding.
- (3) .Produce teachers remarkable for their moral integrity and such character that would enable them successfully serve outside the classroom as community leaders, social reformers, constructive change agents, world peace agents and progress in the international community.

In the light of the objectives of this model, by implication emphasis should be placed on quality and high standards in areas like content, knowledge, attitude and performance. This model suggests aptitude tests for teachers as admission process into the profession. The model emphasizes that the curriculum for teacher preparation the content offering should be based on three elements namely: knowledge, pedagogic knowledge and the pedagogic content knowledge with emphasis on appropriate values, attitudes and skills. (Okebukola, 1996). The teacher education curriculum comprises of mastery of subjects and mastery of techniques of teaching, with considerable premium placed on attitudes, values and skills. The curriculum for producing good teacher should equip student to know how to teach the skills of learning , how to learn, how to be creative, how to encourage the development of new ideas and how to achieve some sense of value in life (Ukeje, 1996). The instructional strategy emphasizes competency based teaching as well as clinical and experimental teaching, the inquiry method or research oriented teaching, problem solving and term teaching. In addition, the model advocates the integration of information technology into educational technology.

Developmental Teacher Education Programme model is characterized by (i) observational teaching, clinical/experimental (micro) teaching, ability to use conventional and innovative teaching techniques effectively, the inquiry method, research based or research guided teaching and team teaching, with a high score set of functional competence. The model advocates the utilization of education technology, Computer Assisted Teaching and Learning (CATAL). In the opinion of Borisade (2002) using this approach, students meet their obligation by being worthy in character, attend lessons, carry out and complete assignments and tests, avoid examination malpractices and being

members of secret cults. At the end, they become worthy in learning and character and become useful to themselves and the society. Others include;

- Improved funding of teacher education programme through diversified sources.
- Improved conditions of service of teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Effective training and functionality of the human resources needed for national development rests upon the quality of the teacher education programme.

The acquisition of basic teaching skills by teachers is paramount if effective and meaningful teaching and learning directed toward the realization of educational objectives is to be met, hence the following recommendations are made:

1. The political leadership should invest lavishly on teacher preparation institutions.
2. The conditions of service of Nigerian teachers should be improved and made competitive with those of other professions.
3. Diversification of funding of education through active involvement of non governmental organizations, community based organizations, wealthy individuals and religious organizations will help ensure adequate funding of education.
4. The education programme should be competency based not experience based.

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