

## TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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### **Abstract**

Teacher education both pre and in-service programmes are offered in the country by different teacher education institutions as declared in the National policy on education. However, teacher education in Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges. These centre on quality assurance professionalization of teaching, brain drain, low moral of teachers and teachers' insufficient knowledge of information communication technology. Teacher education offering requires all hands to be on deck including the government, teacher education institutions and teachers associations. There should be the need for all Nigerian teachers to be proficient in computer education. Finally the task of improving teachers' welfare must be addressed by the government.

Education is generally acknowledged as one of the crucial allies of the development process. Thus, Nigeria education policy makers and social planners in recognition of its potential for leveraging existing social stratifications have placed a huge premium on the development of the education sector. This is reflected in the emphatic resonance in the national policy on education (NPE 1977, revised 1998, 2004) that no nation can rise above the quality of its education system. Based on this self evident trust the national policy formulators recommend as a priority the training of those responsible for facilitating the education of Nigeria as in the development planning process. As a result the national policy on education unequivocally stated that teacher education will continue to be given attention in all our education planning

because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This view was crystallized by Lassa (2000) who noted that the importance of teachers and the roles that they play in the educative process is central to (basic) education particularly in third world countries. However the challenge of teacher training appears to be the most daunting challenge facing the education system in general. In short, out of all the educational problems that beset the African continent today none is as pertinent or as compelling as the one relating to the training of competent teacher who directly and indirectly is bound to influence the quality and quantity of services provided by all other teachers and professors as poor teachers tend to produce their own kind (Afe, 1999). This observation is also corroborated by Perraton and Potashnik (1997) who indicated that teacher education has been severely criticized on the grounds of quantity and quality. Despite this, education systems in sub-Saharan Africa and the south Asia are still characterized by too few teachers and for some subjects there are none at all. In terms of quality of teachers in Nigeria experts have submitted then there is only modest evidence of the effectiveness of the Nigeria teacher education system. The curriculum has been criticized as often not well matched with students own background and culture of the society that the would be teachers are expected to teach (Atemikhe 2004). From time immemorial, the training of teachers has been an issue of concern to researchers and lay members of society alike. Fafunwa (1974) agreed that teacher education is the key to educational development here (in Nigeria) and elsewhere for without adequately

trained teaching cadre Nigeria cannot hope to expand her educational facilities. However till date, the pre-service training and in-service professional development of Nigerian teachers has not reflected the attention and focus of these observers of our educational system. As observed by Jegede (2002), the teacher training system in Nigeria has failed to adhere to the provisions of the national policy on education that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum and that teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovation in their professions. Contributing to this also, Okebukola (2002) opined that in times past the teacher as well as his/her education did enjoy some pride of place but teacher education in Nigeria and indeed education generally in the last two decades had been characterized by incessant instability not unconnected with attempts by practitioners in the field to better their lots. Atemiche (2004) quoting Taiwo (2002) added that teacher education suffered some setbacks as greater emphasis was then laid on how to teach rather than on what to teach.

The foregoing suggests a two pronged challenge that may aptly be dubbed: The problem of number and the problem of relevance. There are the two most deluging challenge confronting the education system in Nigeria today. The problem of number implies that there is an insufficiency in the quantity of teachers that are available for the various levels of education system in Nigeria. This has resulted in a situation where the carrying capacities of classes / teachers have been exceeded due to the exponential rise in student population in the last two decade (NUC 2005). The problems of relevance, on the other hand, means than the actual quality and relevance of the knowledge and competence of the teaching cadre at all levels of the education system are being compromised. Thus, the existing teacher training model does not reflect

the contemporary social needs as well as economic challenges confronting the nation as a whole. This kind of model would necessarily produce inadequate teaching force and thus reinforce the caution that had been expressed by Afemikhe (2004) that good teachers would beget good students from which the system can get a replenishment of its teaching stock. In the same token, poor teachers will beget poor students and consequently poorer future teachers. Thus, the teacher training process in Nigeria must be regarded as the foundation of quality and relevance of education at all levels of the Nations education system if Nigeria is to meet the education for all targets as well as the national goals and objectives.

### **Genesis of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher education institutions started springing up in Nigeria since 1895 when the Hope Waddel training institute was established in Calabar, followed by St. Andrews College Oyo, in 1896. The British colonial administration became involved in teacher training in 1914 when it established one in Bonny. In the northern part of Nigeria, one was established in 1909 at Nassarawa and another in 1921 at Katsina. By 1925 fourteen institutions had been established in the country. Up to 1960 when Nigeria attained her independence many teacher training institutions had been established by the Christian missionary agencies and few by the government to produce elementary teacher (Grade 111) and Higher Elementary Certificate Teacher (Grade 11). Also there was Grade I teacher certificate which was obtained through one of two ways: A grade 11 teacher who passed two advanced level General Certificate of Education ( GCE) subjects could apply for inspection in the two teaching subjects, if successful would be awarded the certificate. Secondly a Grade 11 certificate holder could attend further training in one or two year post Grade 11 college of Agriculture, success in which would earn one award of the teachers

Grade certificate (Adesina 2004). Following the Ashby Report of 1960 which was set up for post – school certificate and higher education, Advanced teacher training colleges. (New colleges of education) were established as from 1962 to produce well qualified non-graduate teachers to teach lower classes in the secondary schools. When the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) started an experiential B.A and B. Sc degrees in education in 1960 it attracted several criticisms. However the UNN blazed a trail because at present there are about 53 Federal and State Universities having Faculties of Education and 62 Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. In all these institution B.A /B sc degree in education are offered. Also for graduate teachers who did not read education there is Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) through which such teachers are groomed to attain both academic and professional competence in education.

There has been a controversy ranging between the proponents of the B.A / B.sc education and B.A /B.sc plus PGDE as which is more appropriate for the teacher education programme (Mkpa 2002). Some institution favours B.A /B.Sc education programme which combines professional teacher education courses with the courses in a teaching subject simultaneously over a period of four year but the proponents of the B.A /B.Sc plus PGDE options stress that the other option does not allow for an in-depth study of the teaching subject option. That is in the bid to combine the two fields, depth is compromised. The PGDE, the proponents hold, allows for an in-depth study of the teaching subject over a period of four years after which one extra year is devoted entirely to professional education. However the two options are being used in teacher education in the country.

### **Challenges of Teacher Education**

The future challenges of teacher education in Nigeria are numerous but the following have been selected for discussion.

### **Quality Assurance and Internal Efficiency**

The academic and emotional qualities of intending teachers for training are critical for quality assurance and internal efficiency for professionalism in teaching in the future. Candidates who usually apply to higher institutions for teacher education in Nigeria are those who have either been denied admission or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular profession including medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc. The usual shortage of applicants seeking admission into teaching programmes in our national universities is a pointer to why admission selection could not be rigorous as it is in other notable and popular professions. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recommended that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. In the United Kingdom applicants must be seen to possess certain personal qualities and characteristics before they are admitted for training (Lassa, 2000). Yet in most of the Nigerian universities, colleges of education and polytechnics, students admission are usually based on obtaining the minimum academic requirements which other requirements such as emotional stability, physical uprightness and communication proficiency were hardly given consideration. In addition to the above, the low quality of teachers produced through in – service training by National Teachers Institute (NTI) is a serious challenge to teacher education. Nigerian scholars noted that most of the teachers upgraded to teachers Grade 11 by NTI were very deficient not only in the academic subject they teach but also in technique of teaching (Obanya 2004 and Emukora 2003). The most discretion challenges are the Pivotal Teacher Training Programme

(PTTP) and Special Teachers Upgrading Programme (STUP) which were currently being executed by the National Teachers Institute (NTI).

The PTTP and STUP were crash programmes of the Federal Government to raise teachers to implement the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. There were introduced to address the gross shortage of qualified teachers at the inception of UBE in 1999 in an apparent search for cost effective alternatives for bridging the gap (FGN 2003). The mode of teaching combines face – to – face contact at weekends and holidays, self – instruction course materials and school experience after which the candidate is qualified to teach. Critics of the programme however condemned the low academic standard of the recipients and the poor quality of admission requirements for the programmes (Eukora, 2003)

#### **Professionalization of Teaching**

Teaching in Nigerian cannot yet be regarded as a profession in the sense of the word. This is because a large number of untrained and un-certificated personal are still retained on the job. Many untrained teachers are still on the employment roll of some states teaching service boards while most higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes it mandatory for all involved in the task of teaching to be qualified in Nigeria, teaching will still continue to be any man's business and cannot claim professionalism as other notable professions such as law medicine, engineering etc.

#### **Brain Drain Syndrome**

The quality of education in Nigeria is reduced in the recent years because of the brain drain phenomenon which led to the drift of more able and more experienced university lecturers to countries where they were offered better

remunerations. This brain drain syndrome are attributable to a large extent, to lack of incentives to improve performance, poorly equipped working environment, inadequate social recognition, lack of control over working conditions and late payment of salaries of teachers. The reliance on in experienced lecturers in the various educational fields in the country definitely affects the quality of students work, and of cause the lecturers of the future. This vicious circle contributes to the low status of education in the universities, college of education as well as secondary and primary schools.

#### **Low Morale of Teachers**

The problems of attrition in the teaching force and the dwindling enrolment in teacher education programmes had immensely contributed to the low status of teachers in Nigeria. Teachers conditions of service are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best brains in Nigeria.

#### **Globalization and Insufficient Knowledge of Information Communication Technology**

Another major challenge to teacher education in Nigeria is that of globalization. The knowledge and use of computer is necessary for all teachers if we are to be trained and re-trained in Information Communication Technology (ICT) more so that the world is gradually becoming a global village. For our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times.

#### **Operation of Continuous Assessment Practice**

Perhaps a revolution in teacher education programme in Nigeria is the issue of improved assessment practice of students' learning outcomes. The National Policy on Education (1981) recommended the implementation of continuous assessment practice at all levels of

education in Nigeria. Continuous assessment is finding out what the students have gained from learning activities in terms of knowledge, thinking and reasoning, character development and industry over a period of time. Scholars in evaluation (Falayajo 2004, and Obanya, 1982) adjudged continuous assessment as the best thing that could happen to Nigerian educational system. Yet, the implementation has been partially undertaken because teachers have not been well trained for this. It is necessary to include training in continuous assessment practice in the pre-service and in service programmes of teacher education in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher education requires special consideration in any deliberation on education because no organized education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Consequently among the purpose of teacher education in the national policy of education is to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment. The needs to meet the basic teacher education requirements for the new universal basic education as well as the implementation of 2004 National Policy on Education were recognized as historical landmarks. It is noted that access to teacher education programmes in the Nigerian higher education did not conform with the international standards as laid down by the International Labour Organization (ILO). There was the brain drain syndrome as well as insufficient knowledge of information communication technology among the Nigerian teachers. All these contribute to the low status of education in the Universities, Colleges of Education as well as secondary and primary schools in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

There is therefore the need for all Nigerian teachers to be proficient in computer education. It is only when we are well equipped

in computer that we can imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is also the need for training our future teachers on entrepreneurial skills development. It is only when teachers are well equipped with such skills that they can transfer them to students. Finally, the task of improving teachers' welfare must be addressed by our governments in Nigeria. The working environment must be well equipped to retain qualified and experienced teachers in our classrooms. Teachers' salaries should be paid regularly while other fringe benefits should be provided to retain teachers.

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