

RE-APPRAISING TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR SELF RELIANCE AND FUNCTIONALITY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This paper focused on the reappraisal of teacher education in Nigeria for self-reliance and functionality with the concomitant issues and challenges facing it. It further reiterated that education remains the only medium through which the national objectives can be attained with teacher education and teachers as indispensable factors. It described teacher education as the academic and professional training given to a would-be or serving teacher to make him or her proficient in the art of teaching. Reappraisal here is seen as re-examination to determine the quality with a view of passing value judgment. It chronicled the evolution of Teacher education in Nigeria from the pre-colonial and the present day and discovered that there is a considerable improvement from the past but also not been able to meet today's challengers which include inadequacy in the quality and quantity of teachers, poor funding, de-motivation of teachers etc. some of the suggestions made include adequate funding and improved motivation in the profession.

Introduction

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), the five main national goals of Nigeria are:

- i. a free and democratic society
- ii. a just and egalitarian society
- iii. a unite, strong and self reliant society
- iv. a great and dynamic economy
- v. a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens

As lofty as these goals are, they will remain as mere paper-Tiger, if there is no medium through which they could be attained. The only known medium through which they could be attained is a virile and functional educational system. This is why education remains the corner stone of any nation and has

been attracting very high investment. However, central to the education sector is the teacher that is, his professional qualifications and skill acquisition. It is been established that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE, 2004). They are the fulcrum on. Which any educational programme hangs and the development of any nations is determined by the attention given to the educational sector. This was why Teferra and Skague (2002) remarked that socio economic progress and social cultural development all over the world has and still depends upon education. According to them teacher education lies at the heart of all the development schemes and that more than any sector, teacher education has been known to play a critical role in poverty reduction, economic progress and socio-cultural development. Since the Nation Policy on Education (2004) surmised that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers, it therefore becomes expedient to assess this system of education as a step towards ensuring adequate quantity and quality supply of teachers in Nigeria "Re-appraising" teacher education in this context means to re-examine the quality of teacher education in Nigeria with a view of passing value judgment. Self reliance in this context means "adequacy" while functionality here implies relevance and the acquisition of necessary professional skills and competency to be able to practice as a teacher.

According to the National Policy on Education (2004) the goals of teacher education shall be:

- (a) Production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.

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- (b) Encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (c) Helping teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (d) Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional back ground adequate for their assignment to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
- (e) Enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Teacher education according to Ofor (1991) refers to institutionalized educational procedures which aim at the purposeful organized preparation of further education of teachers who are engaged directly or indirectly in educational activities as their life work. In the opinion of Durosaro (2006) teacher education is considered as a "process of developing skilled teaching manpower to enable them provide good quality and relevant education to learners at whatever level they operate within the educational system" (p.44). In this paper, teacher education is considered as the academic and professional training given to a would-be or serving teacher to make him/her proficient, acceptable and skillful in the art of teaching.

The focus of this paper is to re-examine teacher education today in Nigeria with a view to making suggestions for improvement.

History of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria dates back to the late 19th century during the early missionary activities (Adeshina, 2005). The first ever known teacher training institution was established in Abeokuta by the 1859 Church Missionary Society (CMS) but later on had to be moved to Lagos in 1867 as a result of the expulsion of missionaries from Abeokuta. It was later on moved to Oyo and became St. Andrew College, Oyo as it is known today (Fafunwa, 1974) where formal teacher training started to

train teachers for missionary activities. Teachers, therefore, were trained for dual responsibilities as catechists and public teachers. The curriculum of teacher education then was integrated with theology. At that time, there was no serious commitment by the colonial masters to the education of the natives but had to change their mind since western education wears coat of indispensability in communication and business transactions.

The following observations were made during the colonial days of teacher education.

- Government intervention in teacher education made them to become regulating bodies for teachers in service with the production of teachers mainly for primary schools.
- Most of the teachers were expatriates without teaching qualifications.
- Auxiliary teachers were employed to teach at Secondary schools.
- There was low enrolment. However later, there was an upsurge in enrolment as a result of competition among missionaries to establish schools. There was a high need for teachers. At this period in time, qualifications for teaching include:
 - Standard Six School Living Certificate
 - Primary School Living Certificate
 - Modern School Living Certificate
 - Grade 3 Teachers Certificate
 - Grade 2 Teachers Certificate
 - Grade 2 failed Testimonial
 - Associateship Certificate in Education
 - Grade 1 Teachers Certificate
 - Honorary Grade 1 Teachers Certificate and Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE).

Shortly after independence; those qualified to teach at the Secondary levels include:

- Ordinary National Diploma
- Nigeria Certificate in Education
- Higher National Diploma

- Bachelor's Degree without Teacher Education
- Post Graduate Diploma in Education
- Bachelor of Education
- Master of Education
- Doctorate Degree

The emphasis on teacher education at that time was on primary school teacher education only between 1896 and 1970 (Durosaro, 2006).

Current Situation of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The type of teachers needed at the various levels of education today have been clearly stated in the National Policy of Education as follows:

- (a) Pre-primary Education, Grade II and NCE teachers
- (b) Primary Education: NCE and University graduates
- (c) Senior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates
- (d) Junior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates
- (e) Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education: University graduates with professional qualifications.
- (f) University: University graduates with higher Degrees and professional qualifications.

The following institutions have been given the mandate by the National Policy on Education (2004) to give the required professional training to teachers:

- Colleges of education
- Faculties of education
- Institutes of education
- National Teacher's institute
- School of Education in the polytechnics

Specialist teachers are also now been produced in the present teacher education programme. Students now spend 3 years for NCE programme with the minimum entry

qualifications set by the National Commission for Colleges of Education and the National Universities Commission for the graduate teachers, (Durosaro, 2006)

Issues and Challengers

There is no doubt about the fact that a tremendous increase in school enrolment started since 1990 following the global declaration on Education for all and the millennium development goals and the related adoption of the Policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE) which automatically calls for more teachers. Unfortunately, the situation leaves much to be desired in Nigeria, today. Decrying to the state of teacher education in Nigeria, Oke Bukola (2010) remarked

The proposal here is for us to reform teacher education, those who are among the bottom ten are the ones who apply to colleges of education. They may have three credits, get in through Pre-NCE and after a lot of patch-patch, bribing and cheating manage to make to merits which they can combine with their O' level to apply for a B.ed in the University. (Pg 21)

Speaking recently, the current minister for education, Professor Rufai revealed that 207, 813 of the 603, 461 teachers under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme are not qualified to teach. One then wonders on the quality of their products. She went further to say that Nigeria states would have to employ 39,524 teachers yearly in the next six years to fill the vacuum in public schools. Unfortunately, today, there are thousands of professionally trained teachers in Nigeria roaming about the streets without job. The breakdown equally shows that of the 180,784 teachers in the North West 84,617 (48%) are unqualified; the North East has 52,277 (57.7%) unqualified out of 90,602; in the North central 40,202 (38%) of the 103,044 teachers are unqualified. In the South-East, 10,646 (16.7%) are unqualified our of 63,783 of them. According

to her, South West has 6,250 (6.7%) unqualified teachers out of 93,358. She prevailed on the Governors, Local Government Chairman and education Secretaries to stop employing unqualified teachers (The Nation, 2010 pg.5).

Another potent issue and challenge of teacher education is the aversion for teacher education. Wokocha (2002) revealed that today “students in other facilities regard their counterparts in the faculties of Education as pursuing careers that lead them to a life-time poverty and so many youths are repugnant towards teaching as a career. It is unfortunate that those who found themselves as students in the faculties of education do so as a last resort or are force to do so just for the purpose of placement. Teaching is seen as a transit camp. They are seen as a last resort, an invitation to poverty. Their rights are treated as privileges and every Nigerian government uses them as sacrifices lambs (Sanni, 2010).

It is equally unfortunate that the knowledge acquired from teaching experiences for teachers in training are not always incorporated in the planning and design for courses they undertake in their university training. Only conventional university based courses are used for their training undermining their wealth of experience that are supposed to be built upon.

One of the goals of teachers education according to the National Policy states “All teachers in education institution shall be professionally trained”. This is unrealistic. It is difficult, uphill now it is difficult to find teachers with professional qualifications in the Universities, apart from those in the faculty of education. They can hardly be found in Colleges of Agriculture, Polytechnics, Schools of Nursing and Colleges of Health Technology. The implication of this goal is that if it is enforced, areas like Engineering, Medicine, Accounting, Law, Pharmacy may not have personal. These professionals can be self employed. This was

why Ehiozuwa (2002) revealed that the policy to professionalize all teachers in educational institutions as mere fantasy, theoretically ideal and utopian therefore, it becomes difficult to make professionals in these areas to become professional teachers.

Most teachers today are deficient in information communication technology. The world is becoming a global village, the need to be part of this development cannot be overemphasized. This was why Annan (2006) remarked that “we need to train teachers and build up research capacity; we need to strengthen open universities and distance learning programmes and we need to ensure that African institutions check access to the latest technologies”.

The goals and objectives of teacher education are amorphous. This was why Ehiozua (2006) remarked that no time limit for the attainment of the goals. It is therefore difficult to take stock of success or failure of the policy.

These issues therefore needed to be attended to so as to make teacher education functional and self-reliant.

In conclusion, therefore, a quality teachers education is needed to attain the much needed educational goals of the nation. A sound teacher education is a *sin a qua non* for social, political and economic progress of a nation and hence Diadla and Moon (2002) remarked that in teacher education, there is the need for a clear articulation of the expected outcomes of training with a clear focus on the improvement of the classroom practice, clear assessment and quality assurance structures so that the teachers know what they have to do and the system is self monitoring in terms of effectiveness, materials resources support that explicitly, guides the teachers in trying out and experimenting with improved strategies within the classroom, school and principal guidance to ensure that teachers training contributes not just to individuals performance but to school improvement.

From the foregoing, teacher education in Nigeria today has been considerably improved than what obtained during the pre-colonial era and immediately after independency but has not been able to meet with the present academic professional, quality and quantity of teachers in the present reality.

Base on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

More funds should be allocated to the education section, at least in line with the UNESCO's recommendation so as to effectively fund the varying needs in this area.

Teachers should be motivated by giving them attractive salaries and allowance that will extend to their hospital bills, their children, etc. Their salaries should not be delayed. With this, prospective entrants will not see it as a transit camp.

Those involved in the training of teachers should be professionally qualified. There are still Colleges of Education today where lecturers have no teaching qualification and yet are training teachers.

Let teacher education be globalized through on-line. There is the need for constant review of its curriculum to be inline with the revolutionalized society in knowledge acquisition so that it will be in tune with present realities.

College of Education wanting to award degrees should be properly scrutinized so that they do not water down the potency of teacher education programme.

Teacher should be encouraged to go for seminars and workshops. It is equally suggested that resource persons should be people be who are on group as professional so that they could be given the best.

Appointment of heads of teacher education institutions should not be politicized. Qualified individuals with appropriate professional qualification should be appointed so as to get the best.

Time frames in which serving teachers have to be professionally trained have to be specified to be able to assess the level of progress made. Politicians should stop employing professionally unqualified people into the profession. Those who are qualified should be given the chance for efficiency and professional growth.

Constant accreditation is needed in College of Education to ensure adherence to minimum standards as specified by National Commission for College of Education and the Universities Commission.

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