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Challenges Facing Functional Teacher Education for Sustainable Development in a Comatose Economy: Nigeria a Reference Point

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Abstract

The paper examined the challenges facing functional teacher education for sustainable development in a comatose economy with Nigeria as a reference point. The paper identified the concept of functional teacher education and a comatose economy with Nigeria as a reference point. The paper also highlighted the major challenges of functional teacher education to include, economic constraints, inadequate public financing of education, inadequate infrastructure/facilities, teachers inadequacies, instability in Nigeria's educational policies and systems, Non-professionalization, of teaching, poor conditions of service, lack of motivation for teachers and poor teacher preparation. The paper concluded that unless all short-cut programmes for producing teachers are discouraged and stopped, the trend will continue.

Key variables:- functional teacher education, sustainable development and development and a comatose economy.

The education is expected to occupy a pre-eminent status in any educational system because his functions can enhance or deter the realization of the system goals. Adeh, (2000), opined that the success or failure of an education system to large extent will depend on the teacher's effectiveness. The quality of his training in turn determines his effectiveness and to the same extent the success of the system, for no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2014).

A functional teacher education, according to Okam and Umed (2001) is a design/scheme for the production of cadre of teachers, men and women in sufficient numbers who are not only contented with inspiring the youths to develop national consciousness and a sense of national unity but, those who are geared towards bringing about an acquisition among youths, the right type of values and attitudes for their individual progress and for the revival of the nation. He went further to not that teachers are needed who can go beyond the mere leading of the youth to a development of their minds and to a proper understanding of the world around them. The teachers should be characterized by the following virtues and qualities:

- a. Possession of certain knowledge, understanding and perceptive which are in consonance with the ideals of democratic citizenship.
- b. Possession of professional skills and techniques necessary as a preliminary preparation to all later learning.
- c. Possession of certain personal qualities and characteristics design to relate learning to real-life problems.

The functional principle here pre-supposes that, the envisaged curriculum package has to be problem-solving in its orientation, it must possess rentive and transfer value and it must display a purpose that relates to life situation. Thus, in effect, a functional teacher education is the teacher who has embraced a good deal of the new methodologies with the effort to move away from rote-learning and teacher-centered procedures. Some examples of such techniques include: problem-solving, small group discussions, projects and dramatization methods, simulation and questioning methods and so on.

Saidu, (2008), posits that a functional teacher is that type of teacher who is capable of demonstrating the highest level of professional competence in all criteria for efficiency and effectiveness. He went further to state that, such teachers should demonstrate the following qualities:

- *Knowledge of the subject matter in the teaching subject area as well as in the professional teacher education area.*
- *Competence in the demonstration of the appropriate teaching skills to cater for variety of learner's interest.*
- *Moral decency in terms of relationship with the learners such that the teacher does not take undue advantage of them.*
- *Innovativeness such that the teacher is receptive to and is always exploring and applying new ideas in the teaching subject and professional education areas of self-improvement.*

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➤ *Commitment and dedication in terms of total investment of time and effort into the teaching and other professional responsibilities for the sole purpose of ensuring the attainment of the goals of the teaching-learning process.*

➤ *Responsibility in terms of fulfilling the teacher's moral obligations to all stakeholders in the education industry such as parents, fellow teachers, other staff, learners, the community and the government.*

Quality education can be achieved with a sound curriculum, trained teachers, and provision of adequate teachers, adequate funding and well planned and controlled inspectorates division. If the above is achieved, it will promote moral intellectual virtues and it will equip learners to be useful to themselves and the society especially in a comatose economy.

A comatose economy is similar to a depressed economy in characteristics. A comatose economy is one in which economic activities are slowing down largely due to reasons associated with excesses, abuses, panic and fears from uncertainties, instabilities and acute unemployment coupled with inflation. A depressed or comatose economy is therefore an economy which experiences a prolonged period of recession or a significant and prolonged economic down turn (Aromolaran, 2014). According to Oviawe and Ehirheme (2014), Nigeria is one of the developing nations of the world with a depressed economy that is still grappling with chronic factors such as unemployment and underemployment, which have kept her in the perpetual bondage of economic frustration. A depressed economy is a problem because both public and private industries and companies cut down their work force which results in nationalization, disengagement, retrenchment, right sizing and down-sizing. The resultant effect of a depressed economy is a fall in the gross domestic product (GDP). The consequences of the fall in (GPD) according to Aromolaran (2014) include:

- *High level of poverty. No means of keeping the body and soul moving.*
- *Decreased consumer and business pending.*
- *Increased unemployment as being experienced in Nigeria.*
- *Declining stock process and fears of further economic woes.*
- *Sustained volatility in currency values.*
- *A recession that leads to extended unemployment.*
- *Abnormal unemployment rates that go beyond the percent or more for a period that extends beyond six months among others.*

A comatose or depressed economy can be of great threat to an education system. It is against this background that this paper examined the challenges facing functional teacher education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Challenges

There are many challenges facing functional teacher education in Nigeria. The challenges of functional teacher education in Nigeria remain formidable and include but, not limited to the following:

1. Economic Constraints

Nigeria's per capital gross domestic product is among the lowest in the world. Seven (7) out of every ten Nigerians live on less than U.S \$1.00 per day. In the area of human development, Nigeria is ranked 168th in the world. Connected with economic constraints is rapid population growth. The population growth in Nigeria contributes to exacerbate economic, social and environmental problems (Rao, 2008). The reality of this is absolute poverty, which has led to high infant mortality and a precarious livelihood for the sick and the aged, and high rates of reproduction that further entrench a life style of poverty among the growing numbers of the poor. The challenges of this is that many people are unable to guarantee themselves food talk less of the luxury of acquiring functional teacher education bearing in mind that, investment in education is capital-intensive an is constrained by investment in other sector such as manufacturing industries, agriculture and construction among others.

2. Inadequate Public Financing

Funding is central to unhindered functional teacher education. As it has been that virtually all the problems of the education sector from primary to tertiary institutions in Nigeria are attributed to inadequate funding. Ajayi and Adenji (2009), right observed that the depressed quality of education in Nigeria has been explained in part by the inadequate funding of the system. As all stakeholders in the education sector have listed funding inadequacy as a problem. Despite the recommendation of UNESCO of 26% of national expenditure must be spend on education, revealed that Nigerian government spends between 4% and 16% annually on education. Such a minimal percentage cannot guarantee functional teacher education for sustainable development.

Infrastructure/Facilities Challenge

Obunadike and Uzoeduna (2014) observed that the inadequate and absolute infrastructure and equipment as well as poor library facilities in Nigeria's institutions of learning has remain the major challenges for the production of functional teacher education. They went further to say that, about 15-30% of the infrastructure, equipment and books are non-functional, absolute or dilapidated. Furthermore the classrooms, laboratories and the general environment of most universities in Nigeria are still far from a state that will promote optimal learning, teaching and research. Okebukola (2008), in enhancing the role of teacher for quality and functional education, teachers should be animators of cultural and co-curricular activities. Teachers must receive training commensurate with the level of education in which they are to function. Lack of qualitative and relevant training skills of the teachers would seriously impede qualitative and functional education both now and in future. For a more viable qualitative and functional education, the training and retraining of teachers should be organized through regular participation in conferences, seminars, workshops and refresher courses which will enable the Nigerian teacher update his knowledge and keep him abreast with current educational curricular and technological innovations. The

findings obsolete of Abenga (2000) decline in students' academic achievement with non-availability of teaching materials and non-availability of classrooms. So far the chairman of the National Task Force on implementation of the new educational policy, the 9-3-4 obsolete that what we have today apart from federal government colleges are "barren" schools which lack the bare necessities and as such the children are not getting enough good education. It also agreed with obsolete Tarnande (2000) who found that resource situation in most schools was not significantly favourable, staff quality was not significantly high while material resources was not significantly favourable. Thus items like libraries, laboratories, classrooms books among others were not only unavailable and those available were grossly insufficient, under-utilized and poorly managed. Such situation would result in sharp decline in the quality of the professional and students that graduate from our educational institutions.

Academic Staff Inadequacies in Nigerian Institutions

A major factor to achieving the mission and vision of any educational institution is the availability of functional teacher's education. According to UNESCO (2007, CITED IN Okebukola, 2008), there is a greater evidence suggesting that teacher quality, quantity and motivation exert noteworthy effects on a host of school variables. He went further to outline the school variables to include enrolment, participation and achievements of pupils/university students. and Uzochuna (2014), posit that according to Federal Ministry of Education, (2009), the total number of academic staff in the Nigerian university system as at 2006 is 27,394, but about 50,000 a short fall required for effective course delivery across the disciplines. They concluded that the implications of this obvious shortfall in the number of academic staff may include: High academic staff/students ratio and severe stress on the academic staff on ground. This short fall in the number of academic staff can further lead to low productivity and decline in the quality of teaching in the Nigerian University and even at the primary and secondary levels of our education system. Related to this, is the poor staff training facilities. No teaching can be effective where the teacher is not well trained. It becomes pertinent to allow teachers to go for in-service training. We can only have functional teacher education when all necessary facilities that are required for a successful training are made available. Teachers are also to be given opportunity to attend conferences, workshops and seminars to keep them abreast with new methodologies in the teaching learning process.

Instability in our Educational Policies and System

According to Shuaibu (2001), this refers to the consistent change of policies and programmes without implementing such policies programmes. The more our policies are epileptic and inconsistent the more, we are wasting our time and resources without corresponding development. Teachers become confused on which policy they should embrace if those policies were to be fully implemented as they are designed, the

Nigerian national could have been competing for a place on the list of the developed nations. Also obsolete Neimi (2002) for a nation to be on the list of the developed, effective teacher education and educational planning are necessary as education and planning are indispensable characteristics for teacher empowerment and the changing of their status in the society. Teachers and instructors need to be trained in line with desired innovation. this can be done through organizing regular seminars, workshops and conferences to keep them up-dated with the new teaching technologies.

Non-Professionalization of Teachers

Teaching unlike other professions in Nigeria is yet to gain the status of a profession. in professions like medicine, law and others the membership is strictly reserved for people who have undergone both academic and professional training. a registration to a professional body as well as being certified by a recognized institution of learning become a crucial point of consideration before one is allowed to practice. Unfortunately such is not obtainable in the teaching. Any person regardless of his academic and professional background would be recruited to teach. This creates room for people to jump into teaching not for sake of interest but rather in order to serve as a stepping stone to other greener pasture. This explains why most of the practicing teachers are ill-equipped, trained and ill-motivated and lack enthusiasm and sense of pride in the job. As such those who undergo the needed training to serve as teachers, feel uncomfortable and consequently decide to throw away the chalk for other jobs. Under such condition, one cannot produce a functional teacher education for a meaningful sustainable development.

Poor Condition of Service and Lack of Motivation for Teachers

By conditions of service, we mean the condition under which the activity of teaching and learning takes place. In a situation where the teaching and learning atmosphere is conducive. its facilities available the efficiency of the teacher and makes learning easier and interesting to the teacher. The teacher also enjoy the teaching and learning process Unfortunately in Nigeria today, the school atmosphere is always dull. The things that may encourage both the teachers and learners become active and functional, committed and dedicated to their job. The current teaching situation is Nigeria though it is improving revealed that, much is needed to supply the required motivation that would boost the morale of teachers. Unless something is done to stimulate and sustain the motivation in teachers, the level of brain may persist.

Poor Teacher Preparation:

Teachers are all those engaged in the teaching profession, ranging from the pre-primary to tertiary institutions. Teachers are very important elements in the teaching learning process. it is the teacher who makes the classroom warm or cold for the learners. He determines the production quota and the quality of products. The quality of

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knowledge and the effectiveness of the products of the schools depends on what the learners has learnt from the teacher (FRN, 2014). The teacher should have a firm grip of his subject or discipline and in addition be able to analyse and interpret the needs, feeling and aspiration of the society not only in the classroom, but also at a less formal level in the community where lives. The situation on ground shows that the quality of average Nigerian teachers in the education industry cannot assure the delivery of qualitative education. The reason being that most of Nigerian teachers are ill-prepared for their teaching duty. Esu (2000) maintained that quality of students is strongly influenced by the quality of not only the training programme but also the experience, attitudes and methods employed by the trainer. Thus, when teachers have not been properly trained to play their of teaching their subjects and giving support and leadership to their learners, integrating themselves into the community and contributing to its development become an impossible task. From the submission above, it shows that most average Nigerian teachers have not received the prerequisite training to enable them become functional teachers. Unless all the shortcut programmes that impede quality preparation in teacher education are discouraged and stopped, the dream of getting functional teacher education for sustainable development will be mere myth.

Conclusion

Teacher education is a potent factor to any education system, for the teacher to work and make sure that the objectives are properly achieved, he must be adequately trained in teacher education programme. The stakeholders, teachers, students and other non-teaching staff are to work hand –in-hand to ensure that the objectives of the programme are achieved. In Nigeria, planning is not the problem but how to actualize it. If teacher education and sustainable development are to match then, serious attention should be drawn to such areas as funding of education, adequate provision of infrastructure and facilities, provision of adequate trained teachers, professionalization of teaching, good condition of service for teachers, proper teacher preparation and maintaining stable education policies. As at now, these areas lack attention.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion about teacher education and sustainable development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. Despite the recommendation of UNESCO of 26% of national expenditure must be devoted to education, a closer look at Nigeria's expenditure on education reveals that Nigerian government expends between 4% and 16% annually on education. The percentage is too low. The government should increase the fund that goes to education annually in order to enhance quality teacher education for sustainable development.
2. Inadequate and obsolete infrastructure and facilities are the characteristics of all institutions in Nigeria. Most of the classrooms, laboratories and the general environment of most teacher training institution in Nigeria are far from a state that will promote optimal learning, teaching and research. The government should improve the

infrastructure and facilities of all teacher education programme to enhance the production of quality graduate teachers.

3. Teacher education programme should ensure that admission of candidate is based on merit in all subject areas such that the selection of intelligent, qualified and interested student- teachers into schools and colleges would lead to the production of sound teachers to match the need for sustainable development in Nigeria.

4. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, the government of Nigeria at all levels should improve the quality of teacher education programme in Nigeria through improved welfare packages, good working conditions and environments so as to attract the best brains into the teaching profession.

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