
TEACHER EDUCATION: A MAJOR STRATEGY FOR RE-ENGINEERING EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND SELF PRODUCTIVITY

By

Boniface S. Akpan

*Department of Primary Education
Akwa-Ibom State College of Education
Afaha Nsit*

Charity Igbokwe

*Department of Primary Education
Akwa-Ibom State College of Education
Afaha Nsit*

And

Rosemary Piate

*Department of Primary Education
Akwa-Ibom State College of Education
Afaha Nsit*

Abstract

The teacher is a living model of every learner. The place of teacher education for qualitative education therefore cannot be over emphasized. As executors and implementers of the curriculum, this paper discusses the strategies for improving the quality of teachers in Nigeria and made recommendations for constant assessment and training to combat the dwindling quality depicted by poor pupils achievements in basic skills and public examinations. It suggests that appropriate policies and funding to teacher education by the government will not only motivate but inspire the teacher towards a stronger service input and attainment of acceptable standard for re-engineering teacher education in the country.

Academic Excellence

Education is indeed a major industry in Nigeria. For the industry to exterminate the fundamental problems challenging its operators and deduce extreme strategies towards radical re-engineering of the sector for the better, indeed the teacher is the first channel of assessment or contact. As enumerated by Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRC, 2004), a teacher is a person who has acquired the requisite knowledge and pedagogical skills with appropriate value system that is in cognizance with the Nigeria education system, who is qualified to teach at the appropriate levels of education in accordance with article 72 of the National Policy on Education which requires teachers at all levels to be professional trained.

Agabi and Okorie (2002), defined the teacher as a senior partner in the classroom relationship. As the classroom is an avenue through which the school achieves the goal of teaching and learning, this process largely depends on the teacher for success. The teacher is viewed as a person which has undergone approved professional training in education at the appropriate levels capable of implanting knowledge, attributes and skills to the learner, (Eruka, 2006). A teacher therefore must possess certain basic skills acceptable for practice in his profession, held as a model before his pupils; the teacher is the determinant factor, a synergy to a direction for the child who he teaches for greater tomorrow. His attitudes and principles are exhibited for redirecting the child for good. That is why it is said that teachers are the mirror which reflects the nation's programmes. All professions and human activities must be given recognition as important people in the society and must be treated with reverence and commitment.

Reacting to the position of teachers in the society, the National Policy of Education (stressed that no education system can rise the quality of the teachers. Based on this fact, teacher education must be considered as the bedrock of every positive development in education. It must be realized that dignity of the teacher is in the success of the child. If there are dwindling qualities in the performances of children depicted in poor academic achievements in school, none can be attributed to any other fundamental factor other than the inefficiency and low standard of the teacher's input.

Re-engineering education therefore begins with reassessing the teacher's academic standard and technical establishment. Eradicating the myriads of social problems begins with improved implementation of teacher education. Mastery of the basic teaching skills in psychomotor, cognitive and affective domains of education can only be realized through effective training and monitoring of the teacher and are essential for the functionality of the society and fulfillment of academic life.

Conceptualization of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education can be visualized as an educational process or context, which has its fundamental aim of preparing people for a role in teaching as a profession. Teacher education is geared towards developing basic understanding of the principles and practice of teaching and learning.

Okafor (1985) defined teacher education as that form of education which is properly and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach trainers or administrators, supervisors and guidance counselors within the same frame of references. Teacher education is therefore a meticulously planned programme which caters for all the basic elements that facilitates or enhance teaching, assist teachers, administrators and supervisors so as to effectively assist the learner in the acquisition of the basic skills, attitudes and general knowledge within an organized learning situation. The basic issue of professional competence of teachers in Nigeria is always a direct reflection by the standard and quality of teacher education curriculum in the country. A rise in the quality of teachers automatically means a rise in societal resource quality and human development.

As every formal teaching takes place in a central point called the classroom, societal values, general knowledge of cultural norms and attitudes in children are re-energized and internalized therein, through teaching/ learning process. In the classroom climate, there are patterns of social interaction which emanates through communicating, co-operating and completing within the process of acculturation. This becomes a guide to the students' behavior and belief. However, all these are done in an organized manner but through the teacher who by virtue of his training, is charged with the responsibility of transforming and directing the students socially, academically and with a perception of building a generation for tomorrow's societal leaders.

Agabi and Okorie (2002) stated that the teacher is the most influential and authoritative person in the classroom. The teacher sets formal goals and expectations for the students, prescribes rules of classroom conduct and enforces such rules. To achieve this, the teacher desires a constant retaining and re-directing to build personality and professional capacity for trust, confidence and efficiency. In functioning in his profession, Enoch (2000) believed that training and educating the teacher is not enough. He stated that more must be done to retain him on the job. To achieve this however, his remuneration must be commensurate with what his knowledge could fetch him elsewhere, if exhibiting the same workload. As we all know, education is the most weapon known for reducing poverty and inequality in our society. As such, it is a foundation laid for sustainable growth and development of any nation. If education must prosper and function positively within the crannies of our society, improving teacher

Academic Excellence

education is vital and indeed inevitable. Or is a common knowledge that no nation seeking growth and advancement in its developmental goals succeeds without nourishing and proper management its greatest instrument of machination, education. In teacher education, knowledge and skills are developed thereby building people to become useful to themselves and to the society they live in. When teacher education is enhanced, the evils of the past are totally changed for the good of the present. The ultimate aim of teacher education therefore, being:

1. To train and motivate teachers for efficient and effective handling of the different levels of education.
2. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adoptable to any changing situation not only in life, but in the wider world.
3. To enhance teachers' commitment to teaching at all levels of Nigerian education.
4. To encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
5. To help teachers to fit into social life of the society and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.

According to Nwangwu (1976) the importance of education to human development is far beyond that of social service. As emphasized by Olele (1995), however, the concept of teacher education cannot be complete with the importance of education to human development. This includes:

Education, universally accepted:

1. It is a form of investment in human beings.
2. It yields economic benefits
3. Contributes to the nation's future wealth and development
4. Education increases productivity capacity of citizens.

However, none of the above would easily materialize where there is no quality education, no qualified or trained teachers and no proper motivation and funding for instance, in some state tertiary institutions where politics and social class manipulate the education system for money, the above description can hardly be merited. There must therefore be proper monitoring and other policy establishments, as well as curate assessment of this misnomer for the right educational reforms to take place.

Challenges and Strategies for Re-engineering Teacher Education in Nigeria

In Nigeria the education system is vital as it produces the personnel required to function in the various facts of life and development. Education, being a major tool for

Teacher Education...

socioeconomic development and socioeconomic development, is carefully organized to harness or facilitate poverty reduction. Wealth creation, employment generation, value reorientation and other basic goals can only be effectively pursued and sustained through efficient and relevant functional education system. However, the major challenge for the educational system in our contemporary society is the production and training of enough qualified teachers to man the various levels of our educational system. This has become so pronounced due to a lot of avoidable factors, which include recognition for teachers, proper remuneration, motivation of teachers, social status, teachers' promotion and training and improving the quality of the teacher.

Manila (1990) noted that teachers are the larger and most crucial inputs of any educational system. Incidentally, there has been so much outcry against the alleged fall in the performance or efficiency of teachers which has culminated on the fall in the academic performance and achievement of our children. In a classical move to improve the quality of our teachers and uplift the low academic standard of our schools, conferences, seminars and workshops must be organized on regular basis by the ministry of education. Practical skill development, in-service training and study leave with pay, should be encouraged for teacher education. Thanks to the Educational Trust Fund (ETF) for a major contribution it is making to give a phase lift to the status and development of the teacher through academic training and sponsorship.

Abiogu (2007) emphasized that Nigeria teachers are more cardinal at the apex of this great change, as his job is further complicated by lack of adequate books. He compares the Nigerian teacher to a farmer who uses bare hands to cultivate his farm at times, and some other times with an antiquated hoe, or a dilapidated or crude instrument applied within a forbidden tradition.

Abdullahi (1990), noted that most teachers lack skills in observation, practical investigation and enquiry. But teaching requires special approach or procedure, which must encourage retention and transfer of facts rather than memorization. Nevertheless an encouragement to a more committed approach to imparting knowledge in the classroom is better rather than what is referred to as "merely informal and memory questions." It therefore means that some methods adopted by teachers in teaching in some of our academic institutions must be redressed with the aim of achieving a sustained educational development. There should be frantic efforts made to provide the teacher with instructional materials to ease understanding of the subject matter within the teaching/learning environment.

Academic Excellence

Government should adequately fund education. The invitation of some expanded programmes from some world or international humanitarian organization like United Nations Organization (UNO), United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) and others certainly propel development and skill attainment. A careful assessment of these options and an application of the basic upgrading opportunities therein, could definitely re-engineer the sector for easy employment and self-productivity.

Conclusion

Education is one of the most important things we can pass on for posterity. It allows us to stay not only informed about the people around us, but ourselves as well. Bennett Reimer states that, "education exists first and foremost to develop every person's natural responsiveness to the power of the art." Every teacher that undergoes training must first be able to gain mastery and skills in his career. Every training should therefore encourage self-development for employment and productivity. This therefore is the beginning of proper re-engineering of education for national development and self-productivity.

Recommendations

We need to favour an education that cultivates the critical capacities, factors a complex understanding of Nigeria and its people and educates and refines the capacity for sympathy. An education that cultivates human beings rather than producing useful machines is developmental in nature and disciplinary in structure. If we do not insist on regular teacher-training options, our education system might be totally productive, numb with elements that are useful enough for our traditional society and development.

Teacher education should therefore be geared towards achieving immediate results that are useful for the immediate development of our society, rather than prosper only paper as theories and policies. Teacher education should propagate professionalism in teaching. Teachers performances standard should be defined and maintained for productivity as could be compared with those of the Nigerian contemporaries worldwide.

Staff training and retraining should be promoted by government as a vital role in determining the effectiveness of the programme. As teachers are trained, knowledge in their areas of specialization as updated. Success in society of course is predicted on success in school. A school deficient in education programmes, regardless of its socioeconomic level, is builds on a trouble-prone and unproductive society. This can

Teacher Education...

easily be interpreted as an abode for redundancy. There should therefore be good monitoring programmes to counter such negative trend whenever it exists.

References

- Abiogu, G. C. (2006). Teacher education in Nigeria: A crucial examination of its planning. *Nigerian Journal of Teacher Education and Teaching*. (3) 188 – 89.
- Abdullahi, A. (1980). Dissemination of science in Africa primary schools: Problems and prospects. *Journal of STAN*, (2), 29 – 36.
- Agabi and Okorie (2002). *Classroom management*. Ogoni: Fersbary Printers and Publishers.
- Eruka, N. (2006). *Teacher education in special needs education*. Jos: Deka Press.
- Enoch, A. O. (2000). Limitation of relevant education and direction for future proposals. *Nigeria Journal of Educational Philosophy*, (vii), 147 – 48.
- Manila, O. (1990). *Teaching as a profession*. Ikeja: Boston Globe Publishing Co. Longman Nigeria Ltd.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National Policy on Education*. Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Nwangwu, N. A. (1976). *UPE: Issues, prospects and problems*. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation.
- Okafor, F. C. (1985). Effective teacher education in Nigeria: A new perspective for Nigeria, based on the National Policy on Education, UNN.
- Olele, C. (1995). Inspection and supervision in education. In V. F. Peretomade (ed). *Introduction to educational administration, planning and supervision*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- Reamer, Bennett (2003). *A philosophy of music education*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall.

