

TEACHER EDUCATION AND TEACHER PREPARATION FOR NATIONAL REFORM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Teacher Education is an aspect of the National Educational system that needs serious attention. Education, which is the bedrock of National development, needs trained and qualified teachers to handle it. The failure of teacher Education could also spell doom for the entire educational system. This paper looks at teacher education and preparation as it affects national development in Nigeria. The paper equally advocated for sound teacher education programme and practices as it is intrinsic within the frame work of nation building and national development. It looks at some of the impediments militating against quality teacher education preparation and practice in Nigeria and proffers solutions to the problems.

Education brings about change and development. Every society fares better if its educational system is in position. Neglecting education is neglecting progress and technological advancement. Most of the developed nations have had good and quality education right in time. Everyone in the society appreciates the need for education and so, the importance of education can never be over- emphasized. Whatever is done or spent for education cannot be much considering the enormous benefits education has brought and is still bringing. Jiboyewa (2003) pointed out that education is a strategic instrument for changing the society and individuals. As a result of its strategic position, Jiboyewa (2003) is of the opinion that education must be fully supported by government, private groups and individuals so that it can continue to perform its traditional role. He listed the roles as social, economic, political and cultural restructuring.

Nigerian government realizing the essence of education to its development has the following educational objectives enunciated in the National Policy on Education. The national goals/objectives are thus in section I subsection 7:-

- a. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity.
- b. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.
- c. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and;
- d. The acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

To translate these educational goals into realities and observable effects are the teachers. Without the teachers, whatever goals set, no matter how laudable they may seem, will be a waste. The level and quality of the teachers determine the level and quality of the educational system since no educational system of any nation may rise above the quality of its teachers.

Teacher Education and Teacher Preparation

More schools, primary, secondary and even tertiary are springing up every now and then and everywhere. As schools are being established, so are pupils and students filling them up. All these need teachers to run them and help achieve the goals of setting up the schools.

The teachers needed in these schools are not just people picked from the factories, industries or even along the streets. The teachers needed are the ones that had undergone some training that qualify them to teach. There are methods and techniques of teaching that one has to acquire before he can qualify as a teacher. It is not everybody who obtained a degree from any higher institution that qualifies to teach. He may teach, but needs teacher education to teach better. It is because of the importance of teacher education that the government of Nigeria decided to give it a place in her National Policy on Education. In Section 9, subsection 70 of the National Policy on Education, it is stated that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. This is borne out of the fact that, a teacher cannot enlighten his pupils/students if he himself is ignorant, (Farrant, 1980).

The goals of teacher education as enshrined in National Policy on Education section 9, subsection 71 are to:

- a. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- b. Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.

- d. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- e. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

All these goals are attainable if one receives teacher education in the following institutions as listed in National Policy on Education (2004) section 9 subsections 72:

- a. Colleges of Education
- b. Faculties of Education
- c. Institutes of Education
- d. National Teachers Institute
- e. Schools of Education in Polytechnics
- f. National Institute for Nigerian Languages
- g. National Mathematical Center.

Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) which is the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession is obtained in Colleges of Education, Institute of Education, National Teachers Institute, Schools of Education in the polytechnic etc. The holders of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) are meant to teach in primary and junior secondary schools. The teachers trained in these institutions are to cater for the needs and goals of the primary Education and the Junior Secondary School Education. Primary Education is the foundation of other levels in the educational system and as such deserves serious attention of educationists or more still teachers. The success or failure of the level of Educational system largely depends on a number of factors among which is the quality of teachers. With the Universal Basic Education Programme (UBE) in place, the quality of teachers that will teach at this level should be of utmost interest and concern of government.

Faculties of Education of the Universities are concerned with teacher education of a higher level. First degree holders in education are trained in these faculties. They also major in other teaching subjects, which are what they teach in the Senior Secondary Schools as well as Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. These days higher degrees are also required to be able to teach in most of the tertiary institutions that run teacher education,

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Teacher education prepares the recipient for the task ahead as the teacher is seen as the all in the society. The teacher has many roles he performs in the society and these roles tend to transform lives and also make the society a better place to live in. The teacher is seen as the teacher he is. He is also a planner, manager, counsellor, disciplinarian, instructor, evaluator, mediator of culture, liaison officer between the schools and the society, and as the oracle of the government. (Denga, 2001) points out

that the destiny of any nation is moulded in the classrooms and the teacher is instrumental in moulding that destiny.

Education has always been the tool for development for the individual and the society. It takes the teacher who has been prepared by receiving a sound teacher education to help reform the national education system. Yusuf (2003) contended that the teacher is the hub to which the wheel of progress and development in education hangs. It should be noted that it is the teacher who implements the curriculum and makes sure the objectives of each level of the educational system are achieved. In that way, education of the nation will be on a sound footing, and the desired development will take place. Teacher education preparation for national education reform in Nigeria is being faced with some problems which when solved; the educational system will be the better for it.

Impediments Bedeviling Teacher Education and Teacher Preparation in Nigeria

There are so many problems that bedevil teacher education, but few of them will be discussed in this paper as follows:

1. **Funding:-** Funding has been a major problem of teacher education and preparation. Government is trying its best in making funds available for teacher education but it is not enough considering the huge sum that is involved in procuring modern equipment and tools for teaching/learning. Fund is also needed to procure books, erect more buildings and provide other infrastructure. Inadequate funding has made teacher education not to be what it is supposed to be.
2. **Lack of Recognition:-** It is true that teaching is now a profession with the teachers' Registration Council in place to check and regulate issues yet it is not given the due recognition and respect it deserves. The society still looks at teachers as second class citizens that should not be reckoned with. Even when people receive this teacher education, they tend to veer off into other fields which might seem lucrative and more profitable. In this case, schools that are springing up, particularly the Universal Basic Education (U.B.E) will definitely lack teachers that will man the programme.
3. **In- service Training:** - Most teachers are comfortable with the status quo. No efforts are made for retraining in order to be abreast with modern methods and techniques which will enhance teaching as well as learning. Okwusogu – Baba (2000) asserted that without retraining, a teacher may fall back to routine teaching, repeating self, making use of old books, methods and techniques.
4. **Infrastructure/Amenities:** - Most of the teacher education schools lack the necessary and modern infrastructure and amenities needed for teacher education. It is not enough to say everybody, particularly the teachers, should be computer literate while there are no computers, projectors, film slides, modern blackboards, television, and textbooks. Some teacher education schools even lack enough classrooms/lecture theatres for convenient training of the teachers.

The available classrooms lack adequate desks and chairs. One begins to wonder the quality teacher education that will be when the educational facilities are not provided. In a situation like this, decay may set in instead of reforms

5. **Admission Procedures:** - The calibre of students admitted for teacher education is quite discouraging. Most people have the feeling that teaching is meant for the dullards and drop-out from the school. What obtains in most teachers education schools as regards the calibre of students admitted is better imagined. The students cannot read nor write well. They cannot even comprehend some tasks before them. The goal of everything is that, they must graduate as teachers with certificates given. This set of students or graduates are paraded as teachers and employed as teachers. Performance in the field becomes a thing of concern to all stakeholders. Instead of moving forward, the system keeps drifting backwards.
6. **Poverty:** - Poverty affects teacher education and preparation. Most affluent families would not allow their children to go to read teacher education and become a teacher at the end. So, it is observed that it is the lowly in the society that end up asking their children to go to a teacher training school. These indigent students cannot afford anything on their own. Government is expected to provide virtually everything that is needed for teacher education. Some of these students want government to provide even cardboard papers, pencils and pens, foolscap sheets and so many other things. Nobody wants to get committed to teacher education. After managing to graduate as teachers, government is also expected to pay fantastic and fat wages which is alright, anyway.
7. **Lack of Supervision:-** Not being able to monitor what is going on in the teacher education schools can spell doom. This government seems to be relaxed in this aspect when what the teacher makes of the system is what reflects in the society. Lack of supervision and inspection has contributed to the low quality of teachers produced who in turn affect the education system adversely.

Suggestions

Borishade (2002) in his “forward” in the minimum standards for Nigeria Certificate in Education indicates that, poor quality in teacher education will be a National disaster which must be avoided by insisting on the best. With that in mind the following suggestions are given to help make teacher education what it should be.

Government alone cannot fund education especially teacher education on which the whole educational system depends. Companies, industries, non-governmental organizations, wealthy Nigerians can and should contribute to the funding of teacher education if there is going to be a reform in the nation’s educational system. No amount is too big or small. If the government is supported to lift teacher education high, then the nation at large will be the better for it.

Teacher education is one of the main factors of educational development as well as the development of the society; therefore, teacher education should be accorded the

recognition and respect due to it. Knowledge is power and it is the teacher that empowers one. Money is good, but everything is not money. Money can buy certificate, but money cannot buy knowledge. Ignorance can kill a society, so teachers should be reckoned with by everybody. The society cannot do without teachers to translate the nation's goals into worthy developments. Let the teachers be treated well in terms of salaries/welfare, and other motivational incentives. Teachers should be allowed and sponsored for in-service training, workshop, seminars and conferences as these will help to keep them up-to date with modern trend of things.

Teacher education needs the entire infrastructural facilities, amenities and teaching facilities that will help knowledge, classrooms convenient for learning should be built. Computers, televisions, projectors, film slides and other educational equipment should be made readily available. All stakeholders in the nation's education can donate most of these things to assist the government.

Government should be strict and concerned about who should be admitted into teacher education. Teaching is brain tasking and therefore, cannot be for dullards and never-do-wells. It is not for drop-out or lazy ones. All admission measures should be in place for proper selection into teacher education. It should be noted that what a teacher has is what he gives and the nation or society cannot rise above what the teacher is or has. Some brilliant indigent students can be supported and helped by giving them scholarships or some tokens or money to assist them. Such students will not only affect their families, but the society at large.

There has to be proper routine supervision and inspection of what is happening in teacher education schools if success is to be recorded other than failure. If this is done it will help the standards to be what it should. Supervision and inspection forestalls malpractices and mismanagement, responsibility and accountability should be the watch word of teacher education for a good reform of the educational system of our dear nation Nigeria if we are to go forward.

Conclusion

To conclude therefore, it should be noted that education brings about development whether to an individual or society. Education brings technological advancement which has bettered the lots of many. Human beings cannot live without education for it is power. Education cannot equally bring about the desired reforms without the teachers who man it. Teachers, who receives teacher education and are prepared for the task of teaching, help to translate the educational goals into realizable and practicable units. Teacher education is, therefore, to be accorded the recognition and honour it deserves. All stakeholders are to join hands to salvage teacher education from an impending decline and collapse.

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