

VISION AND MISSIONS OF THE TEACHER IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Ameh Eke Zainab

Abstract

Teacher Education is basically related to every phase of our development for wherever one turns, be it in the socio economic or political sphere of activities, one is faced with the problem of trained man-power. However, no adequate training or learning can take place without competent teachers, and no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teacher Education is a necessity for high-level national development. Consequently, teacher education must come at the top of every list of priorities concerned with education because the services of the teacher are indispensable to any nation and he, more than any other professional, influences the lives of the nation's youths and the nation's future. The Paper looks at the brief history of teacher education, the aims and objectives of teacher education. Problems and prospects of teacher education are highlighted and recommendations aimed at solving the problems associated with teacher education are also made.

Introduction

One of the most significant developments in Nigerian Education is the publication by the Federal Government of Nigeria of the National Policy on Education in 1977 (Revised in 2004). The National Policy represents a bold step by government to address the problems that derive from the limitations of the colonial curriculum, which the nation inherited after her independence. The Colonial curriculum produced school leavers who were suited only for white-collar jobs. After independence, the most obvious limitation of that type of curriculum, which emphasized mainly literacy education, namely, unemployment, became apparent. It therefore, became necessary for ways to be sought to accommodate the problem.

In 1969, a national curriculum conference was convened to review the existing curricula and if possible restructure the nation's educational system to cope with the nation's socio-economic aspiration. That conference recognized that school leavers must be able to exist as self-reliant individuals and contribute to the nation's development efforts. The conference attracted people from all socio-economic and interest groups, and each group made input on the anticipated goals and orientation of the nation's educational system. The outcome of the deliberations of the conference was the philosophy for Nigerian Education.

The objectives of Nigerian education which the conference formulated into a national philosophy were

the inculcation of national unity and national consciousness.

the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and of society.

the training of the mind in understanding of the world around us.

the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both mental and physical as equipment for the individual to live in his society.

History of Teacher Education

The history of Teacher Education in Nigeria dates back to the time formal education was first established in the country. This could be associated with the coming of the missionaries who had started to establish schools as part of their evangelism efforts in Nigeria. It is important to note that the history of teacher education in Nigeria cannot be divorced from the development of schools. The establishment of schools, therefore, necessitated the provision of teachers who were to operate in the formal institutions established by the missionaries. During the early years of the profession, teaching was done just by any one with a general knowledge, such a person could be called upon to teach simply because he/she is an evangelist unlike today when emphasis is on the employment of trained professional teachers. The early schoolteacher could not therefore be regarded as a professional like we have today.

The pre-occupation of the missionaries then was to spread Christianity. To reach the adherents therefore, they had to establish schools where people would be taught reading, writing and arithmetic in addition to religious education. The curriculum established by the missionary was a narrow-one that was not based on the value of the society and the need of the child and according to Babs Fanfuwa (1966), a group of leisurely monks who spent all their sheltered life in a monastery during the Dark ages, with little or no contact with life outside their self-imposed confinement, planned the curriculum for children they never knew and the society of which they knew so little.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Aims and Objectives

Education is the greatest hope of a nation, particularly for a developing country such as ours. Without any doubt, Nigeria has long realized its importance and to justify this claim, education consumes the largest part of the country's budget every year. Over the years, phenomenal changes has taken place in Nigerian education in terms of increased school population, buildings, staff, and the like, but these changes have not affected the curriculum fundamentally. This of course does not mean that there have not been partial and piecemeal changes in which a few subject matter specialists are appointed to make some modifications - a patch here, a patch there and Joseph's coat of many colors at the end of the exercise (Babs Fafunwa, 1972).

African countries, and Nigeria in particular, still pursue the inherited system years after the country of origin has abandoned or drastically modified its own system to suit its changing economy. Of all the educational problems that beset the African-countries today, none is as persistent and as agonizing as the one relating to the training of the competent teacher. The demands for more and better schools, the need to relate the curriculum to the needs of the child and his environment, the crying need for desirability of training in vocational and technical skills and indeed the over-all problem of preparing the future citizens of Africa who will be fully oriented to their environment cannot be effectively accomplished without the aid of competent teachers, nor can the demand for trained manpower be adequately met for the success or failure of all these goals depends entirely on the pattern, the content and the objectivity of a teacher education programme designed for these purposes.

The history of Nigerian Education is punctuated by landmarks representing efforts of government to improve the quality of education in Nigeria. The earliest effort was in the 19th Century by which period government stepped into the educational enterprise, which prior to 1882 was managed solely by the Christian Missionaries. Government participation was mainly in the forms of promulgation of codes and regulations, funding of education, instituting of commissions to investigate and report on various aspects of Nigerian Education, etc. One of the most significant efforts of governments in recent time was the restructuring of the nation's educational system to usher in the new system. Several seminars were held by the Federal and State Governments on the basis of the philosophy for Nigerian Education. Finally, the National Policy on Education emerged in 1977 as the outcome of the deliberations of the said seminars. The document was revised in 1981 and has since remained the blue print for Nigerian education. In the document, the aims and objectives of Teacher education as spelt out include:

- the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system.
- the encouragement of further spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.
- the provision of teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situations not only in the life of their country but in the wider world.
- the enhancement of teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

For the realization of the objectives, the government saw the need to expand teacher education in order to cater for the requirement of vocational, technical and business education. New programmes are also to be worked out to be enable teachers update themselves and to ensure that the

teaching services are to be planned in such a way that teachers can transfer from state to state without loss of status. Teachers could be motivated with increase in their salaries or improvement on their conditions of service or could be given other types of reward in order to keep them on the job. The objectives also spell out that teachers should work under a conducive environment in terms of provision of instructional materials and other Educational materials so that they will not be underutilized. Teachers should be creative by undertaking research and venturing into new methods of teaching. They should try as much as possible to relate their curriculum to their immediate environment. Teachers should be professionally trained to boost their status in the society.

How far has these various objectives been achieved? The answer to this question takes us to the next topic which is problems and prospects of teacher education in the 21st Century. ' •-' •»

Problems and Prospects of Teacher Education

Babs Fanfuwa notes that one major problem of the African teacher today is lack of adequate tools. He comments, "The African Teacher of today is like a farmer who cultivates his farm sometimes with bare hands, sometimes with an antiquated hoe or with any other crude instrument that is available. He sometimes succeeds but often fails, not because he enjoys the odium of failure but because he can only teach what he knows how and with the material available to him".

Lack of teaching-learning aids and research facilities in our educational institution could be brought about by organizational mismanagement of funds and lack of adequate funding by government. Adequate funding by government will lead to adequate supply of teaching-learning aids for manpower development.

We also have the problem of quality. The poor quality of teachers produced could result from lack of qualified teachers to teach. Poor interpretation and poor implementation of syllabus and lack of dedication to duty can all bring wrong teaching and poor quality of teachers produced. The quality of the existing teaching force can be improved through extensive in-service training with incentive system built into such programme. We can ensure better quality of teachers through pre-service education of teachers by careful selection and training, effective induction, professional encouragement, and adequate remuneration. A system should be devised that will encourage the good and effective teachers to stay in service. Competent training of teachers will give rise to competent teaching of learners. The end result of this is the production of competent teachers for the country's education system.

Another big problem with teacher education is lack of professionalization of teaching. Unlike the Medical, Legal and other professions, teaching has yet to assume professional status in Nigeria. There are too many entry points, a situation which creates the necessary loopholes for mediocrity to infiltrate the profession.

Lassa (1988) notes that "many youths manifest aversion for teaching as a career. The implication is that majority of people who are recruited into teaching are either birds of passage or those who have nothing as a better option. Even those who have trained as professional teachers readily veer with the slightest opportunity into customs and excise, Banking, Insurance and the Oil Sectors". Teachers' organization in Nigeria must behave more like professional organization and less like trade unions. To do this they must have a positive code of ethics and introduce a classification system within the group. The government of the federation for their part should support teachers' professional organization and consult them more frequently, before new policies are promulgated. The teachers organization or associations must as a necessity provide a professional code of ethics that will lay down minimum entry qualification into the teaching profession, provide its own effective machinery for disciplinary action against those of its members who violate its professional code of ethics and protect and promote teaching welfare.

Our primary and secondary institutions as well as our teachers' colleges and universities have not all started relating their curricula more realistically to the needs of their society. We cannot continue to tie ourselves to the apron strings of our past colonial masters and expect others to respect us or our institutions. Our rich cultural heritage is being neglected. The present British oriented curriculum should be replaced by a more meaningful and culturally rewarding one. If our culture is to survive, we must teach African folk-lore, art, music, history, religion, literature and language both at primary, secondary, teacher training and university levels.

Another major problem confronting teacher education is that teachers' salaries are nothing compared to those of other professions. Apart from their take home pay, teachers don't enjoy other benefits in form of house loan, car loan, furniture loan etc. Our teachers also avoid going to rural areas to teach because of lack of social amenities in the rural areas. The only way teachers can enjoy teaching is to be given salary increment and those who are prepared to go into the rural areas - away from the bright lights and other attractions of the city should be paid higher salary. I am using this medium to appeal to those who are holding teachers monetization to please release them.

Vision and Mission of Teacher Education in the 21st Century

Before stating the vision and mission of Education in the 21st Century, let us briefly know the meaning of vision and mission of Education.

Vision of education is the ability to imagine how our education, will develop in the future and to plan in a suitable way, while the mission of education is what we believe is our duty to do in order to improve teacher education.

The vision of teacher education in the 21st Century is such that will among other things be in harmony with the National Philosophy and goals of Education in Nigeria as well as the goals of teacher education as enunciated in the National Policy on Education. The vision could go on in embracing the new ICT Programme where every teacher is encouraged to be computer - literate. The computer is fast becoming an everyday language, not only in industries but also in education. We should no longer delay in getting our teacher education programmes to include computer literacy for all teachers and, if possible, recycle serving teachers back to schools to get literate in the use of computer.

The vision of teacher education should also be high level of professionalism in teaching and the establishment of universities wholly for teacher education where emphasis should be placed on pursuit, promotion and dissemination of knowledge, research, provision of intellectual leadership and manpower development.

The mission of teacher education in the 21st Century or what the present Nigerian teacher needs to do in order to realize the goals of Education are as follows:

1. Motivation of teachers. Ayodeji says the greatest challenge facing the Nigerian teachers is that of motivating the teachers. He says that if the objectives of education are to be achieved, it becomes imperative that the teachers must be motivated. Motivation could be through increase in salaries and allowances of teachers and also provision of adequate facilities or materials to enhance teaching effectiveness.
2. Adequate funding of all teacher training institutions: Government, individuals, organizations, parents and teachers should contribute in funding teacher education in order to make for quality education.

The mission of teacher education in the 21st Century should also be improvement in teacher education curriculum. Student teachers should be exposed more to skills and knowledge essential for professional effectiveness or efficiency instead of one for more subject matter acquisition.

There is also the need for professionalization of teaching profession and the introduction and strengthening of the ICT programme for the teacher.

Some of these items are in harmony with the national policy's views and aspirations.

Recommendations

1. The entry qualification into the teaching profession to NCE (National Certificate of Education) should be raised.
- 2. Encouragement should be given teachers association to establish an appropriate code of ethics as well as an effective disciplinary system in order to become professionals both in theory and in practice.
3. Government and ministries should consult teachers more frequently and effectively before new policies affecting teachers in particular and education in general are promulgated.
4. Increase in the conditions of service of teachers and payment of a higher salary to teachers who work in the rural areas should be effected.

5. Teachers should be given opportunities to update their knowledge through in-service, pre-service and other professional training.
6. University institutes of education should assume full responsibility for the education of the teachers of teachers and provide diploma courses for new university lecturers.
7. Teachers should be equipped with adequate instructional materials to avoid frustration and under utilization of human resources.

Conclusion

Teacher education is intimately related to the ever-recurring problem of the need for trained manpower in Nigeria and therefore affects the social, political and economic spheres of our lives. Teaching, more than any other profession, touches the life of practically every citizen either as student, parents, guardians or administrators and planners. To treat the teaching profession with levity and careless abandon is to damn our own future. A poorly trained and unsure teacher will likely reproduce a poor doctor, engineer, architect, fellow teacher and the like. The services of the teachers are indispensable to a nation, for they, more than any other professional group, influence the lives of the Nigerian youths and therefore the nation's future.

References

- Fafunwa, A. B. (1989). Introduction to the Conference Papers; Teacher Education in a Philosophy for Nigeria Education.
- Fafunwa, A.B. (1994). *History of Education in Nigeria*. Revised Edition. Lagos: University Press Ltd.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1981 Revised 2004). *National Policy on Education*. Lagos: NERC Press.
- Lassa, P.N. (1998). Vision and Mission of Teacher Education in Nigeria. In Isyaku, R. et al (ed) *Vision and Mission of Education in Nigeria. The challenges of the 21st Century*. Kaduna: WCCE.
- Wokocha, A.M (2002). The Imperatives of Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria. Keynote Address for the Stakeholders Meeting Organized by the Teaching Registration Council at the WCCE, Abuja June 2002.

