

# ENSURING COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY, NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Teacher education is an aspect of education, which affects the whole nation and the pivot around which the country's educational mechanism revolves. For the development and stability of economic, social and political spheres of the nation, there have to be quality in all educational levels in the country, more especially the teacher education. This is so because every quality education is designed to meet some objectives. This paper attempts to x-ray the challenges of teacher education in the era where computers and information technology are posing challenges to humanity. The teacher of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century must be very knowledgeable in order to face the challenges. Problems of teacher education were highlighted and strategies for remedying the constraints have been advanced.

## Introduction

It is a truism that education is the veritable instrument of change and development of any nation. This is why we see education as a process through which knowledge, skills and right attitudes and values are inculcated in the child so as to be useful to himself as an individual and then the society in general. Education is also the foundation upon which a people or a nation builds the structure and process through which it defines itself and develops its resources and potentials.

Nigeria, like other countries of the world aspires to attain her height of development so that her citizens can live happily and comfortably. This is reflected in the country's five national goals as contained in the national policy on education 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2004 to include:

- (a) Free and democratic society;
- (b) Just and egalitarian society;
- (c) A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- (d) A grate and dynamic economy;
- (e) A land full of bright opportunities for all citizens

The accomplishment of the above national goals depends largely on the availability or quality of human resources in the country, which the education industry is expected to do. It is then the role, of the teacher to help the nation realize these goals through impacting the right knowledge to the children. For the teacher to do this then, calls for effective and qualitative teacher education in this country. The philosophy sees the importance of all Nigerian citizens have equal access to educational opportunities in the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both insides and outside the formal school system. This is because education has been adopted as an instrument for achieving national development.

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On a more concrete term, to achieve quality human resources, one of the national educational goals emphasizes the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. By implication therefore, for the country to be able to toil to path of development successfully, teacher education must be seriously given a pride of place, so that our teachers can train Nigerians who will be so empowered to participate actively in the management of the resources of the nation. This forms the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In this paper, attempts will be made to briefly look at the following:

- The concept of teacher education,
- The yesterday and today's teachers.
- The challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century teacher at various levels of education.

## Concept of Teacher Education and Teacher Preparation

Okafor (1988), defines teacher education as that form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach, particularly, but not exhaustively in primary and post primary levels of schooling. In its extended dimension, it encompasses also the preparation of administrators, supervisors and guidance counselors within the same frame of reference. For Yats (1972), teacher education means an "institutionalized educational procedure that aims at purposeful and organized preparation of teachers who are engaged directly or indirectly with educational activity as their life work.

From the above definition, it is a truism that teacher education is the instrument through which the training of needed manpower in any country could be adequately achieved. For this reason, there must be a sound and purposeful programme of teaching and instruction to cater for the needs and aspirations of learners at all levels of schooling. "It will also require adequate training of staff who will gain experience and insight to enable them guide the learners to excel in knowledge and skills in the various fields of human endeavours so as to meet with the challenges posed by science and technology in the world of computers, globalization and information technology of today.

Onyeukwu (1999), sees teacher preparation as the "science and technology" to be acquired to enable him create the classroom environment to become workshop and laboratory where students are modeled, remodeled and patented with the award of certificate. Since teachers are said to be made not born, the making of a teacher is teacher preparation.

From the above explanations, teacher education can be seen as a process of systematically preparing teachers in the art of acquiring proficiency and competency in transmitting worthwhile knowledge, skills and values to youngsters so as to be useful to themselves and the society in which they belong through cultivation of the spirit of industry, discipline and patriotism. All these qualities are needed for the development of Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The quality of teacher education programme in any country determines to a great extent the nature and spirit of the education of such country's economy. It has therefore, become necessary for a teacher to be competent and capable of having a specialized knowledge acquired by long time training. He needs to be adaptable, flexible, enthusiastic, industrious, open-minded (especially to new information), refined and resourceful, possessing leadership qualities and being scholarly inclined (Akaunde, 2001).

### **Teacher Education Before 1969 Conference**

Formal education was brought to Nigeria through the efforts of Christian Missionaries who managed and run schools and colleges, including teacher-training colleges. During their days, teacher-training colleges were highly regarded, people had strong longing to be educated therein and upon graduation, the teacher and his work were highly respected. In those good days, the teacher was the village Solomon as everyone looked up to him for guidance and advice. They were ready to teach and actually taught. They were highly dedicated and tried to fish out talents in the pupils and laboured to see that such talent had opportunity to develop (Oboe, 1998).

Equally worth mentioning was that on graduation, they were readily employed. The best graduating primary school pupils were either selected or recommended to take a competitive entrance examination for admission into the Teacher Training College (TTC) or gain automatic employment to teach the lower classes (Junior Primary). Such pupils were the best not only in learning but the products of teacher education then actually went to teach, loved teaching and were appreciated by the society especially in the rural areas where most of them taught.

The situation is not the same today. Teaching and teacher education have become a place where those who fail to secure admission into the University fall back on Colleges of Education as the last resort. And even so, in some colleges of education, only those who are deficient in one subject or the other are pushed to read Primary Education Studies since the course is supposedly meant for those who want to teach in primary schools. They get into the college reluctantly and are in a hurry to get out of it. Not a few of those graduating abandon teaching, which they have been trained for, and engage in other occupations (Okoye, 1995).

One of the basic differences between teacher education of yesterday and today is that the proprietor of teacher education of those days showed a consistent sense of direction. Today, there are three different groups of proprietors of College of Education, the Federal, States and Private individuals and organizations. These colleges today, are being subject to different treatments in funding, staffing, provision of facilities, etc depending on who owns the institution. This calls for serious harmonization of programme.

### **Teacher Education From 1969 - Today**

One can say without fear of contradiction that the present education system was the offshoot of the National Curriculum Conference of 1969. The conference looked at past educational goals and identified new ones in line with the needs of the Nigerian citizens. The final outline of the conference was National philosophy of education, in which teacher education was highly emphasized if Nigeria has to cope with the present dispensation - the world of computers, etc.

This led to the founding of many colleges of education and creation of many faculties of education in

Nigerian Universities. Both State and Federal governments and now many private individuals and organizations established institutions of higher learning for teachers training. Distance learning centers and sandwich programmes for training of teachers emerged in order to upgrade teachers who are expected to help launch Nigeria into the era of technology, according to Onyeukwu(2001).

The 6 - 3 - 3 - 4 system of education was adopted in 1976 and the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) become the minimum qualification expected to be held by any teacher who wants to remain teaching or who wants to join the teaching profession. Teacher education today has-phased out Teacher Grade II and Sandwich programmes mounted by almost all the colleges of education and universities to update/upgrade the grade II teachers. Primary Education Studies is now being emphasized as 60% of total admission into Colleges of Education is reserved for PES while 40% for other courses. Full time students need minimum of three years or a creativity; students who can access, evaluate and use knowledge for mental poverty is worst than physical poverty.

Our values and priorities should be re-examined. Science and technology is synonymous with economic power, military might and attainment of viable economic order. Many countries of the world especially, Japan, Singapore and South Korea have realized the power of science and technology and have done well in that regard. These are the challenges ahead of our teacher education programme in-the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It would be a waste to recruit and train as teachers people who have no interest in teaching as a career. The recruitment and retention of competent teachers is one of the greatest problems of teacher education in Nigeria. Preparing teachers for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century should take care of three main levels of education in Nigeria: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary.

### **Primary Level**

Education at this level should aim at developing creativity, imagination and national consciousness in Nigerian children. From the intellectual preparation of growing pre-service teachers; sufficient background in general education and specialized knowledge in his area of specialization is very essential. He should be able to understand the social and economic forces within his society, the political and cultural institutions of his people irrespective of his field of studies. He should utilize the children's creative minds.

The 6-3-3-4 system, which spelt out what each child should learn at any stage if properly followed, will take us there. Subjects like social studies, computer science, local craft, local culture of various ethnic groups, English Language and Arithmetic should be intensified at this level. The evaluation or administration of examination at the end of the teaching programme should reflect the three domains - the manipulative skills, cognitive, which deals with ability to recall and the affective which is the measurement of the student's level of appreciation, emotion, feelings, etc.

### **\ Secondary School Level**

The objectives of secondary education in Nigeria are highly spelt out in the 2004 edition of the National Policy on Education. It is expected that the graduate of secondary education can provide the middle manpower needs of the country. This being the case, teacher education curriculum should broaden to accommodate in a more serious way the study of science and technology. Equally of importance is computer appreciation, which will enable them to cope with the world of computers/Emails. Therefore, the teacher should always avail himself/herself with the latest information management technology. Vocational education is necessary at the secondary school level. This will impact certain knowledge or skills, which will make people, job creators in the face of problem of unemployment.

### **Tertiary Level**

The tertiary institutions are seriously charged with the responsibility of producing both medium and higher manpower needs of the country. Hence, specialized courses in various areas of needs should be taught. Balogun (1987), identifies three major variables influencing learning in our educational institutions, which in turn militate against teachers' preparation in Nigeria. They are: Facilities:

Social system, needs, values and priorities as they affect curricular activities

Task and method variables and characteristics and teacher qualities and competences.

The NCCE minimum standard accommodates these variables of standard but with a different approach under staffing, facilities, leadership and funding. This discriminatory application by different colleges or universities cannot help us; therefore, there is the need for true harmonization.

## **Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Onyeukwu (2001) outlines the problems facing teacher preparation, production and retention as:

- Inadequate curriculum content.
- Inadequate entrant selection criteria.
- Inadequacy in the process of teacher education.
- Duration of teacher education programme.
- Teacher educators.
- Retention of trained teachers in the profession.
- Educational policy implementation.

These writers totally agree with the view of Onyeukwu because it agrees with Ajayi (1982) in Ukanukpong (2002), when he observes that: one of such profession that is suspected to be faced with exodus of unwilling clients is teaching profession.

It is professions where people enter at will and go out at will, hence there is no serious attention. The image of the teacher has been so destroyed that some people find it difficult to identify themselves in public as teachers.

## **How can the Teacher of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Be prepared for the Challenges Ahead**

We shall go back to the problem in order to proffer solution. In the area of curriculum content, there is the need to re-design it, to make it more functional and challenging. Since we are in the era of computer, Chemistry, Physics, Computer Science, Geography, Integrated Science and Social Studies must be given serious attention.

Teaching has undergone various changes to cope with the world of science and technology; selection of students into colleges of education/faculty of education should be more rigorous. It should not be left open for those who fail to get admission into the course of their choice to switch over to teaching/teacher education. Selection interview should be adopted apart from the normal entrance examination to determine suitability of individuals and intentions.

The duration of training should be increased from three to five years in the case of colleges of education. And it is on this note that we welcome the two-year proposed compulsory teaching in primary schools after graduation, to make it seven years. After this, the teacher should be certified or licensed. This in a way would check entrants into the teaching profession.

The issue of teacher retention is one of the greatest problems of today's teacher education. Many qualified and experienced teachers leave to look for a greener pasture elsewhere due to poor motivation. Dare (1994) sees motivation as the circumstances responsible for increased performance and high productivity on the part of individual. Maslow (1969) defined motivation as hierarchy of needs or motives, which move in stages from the lowest to the highest etc. When a teacher sees, that he is not highly motivated like his counterpart in another profession, there is the tendency for him to leave and look for where there is a better condition of service. The choice of a career by individuals or group of people depends largely on the remuneration and socio-economic status attached to it.

Education policy formulation and implementation can aid and strengthen it or destroy it, depending on how good the policy is and how successful the implementation. For the preparation of teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and for functional teacher education, the full implementation of the relevant sections in the National Policy on Education as regards teacher education should be fully addressed.

## **Conclusion**

It is pertinent to note that education and knowledge are the keys to economic advancement and thus higher levels of resources. Education bestows many benefits on the society, which are quite empowering. It gives a citizen a greater sense of self-esteem and self-confidence, enabling the individual to assert his/her rights and plays a greater role in the decision-making within the family and the wider society.

No nation can grow technologically and scientifically in this century of high technological breakthrough occasioned by computer and new information techniques if adequate preparation is not made to cater for their youth. The task of bringing up the nation's potential manpower square lies on a good teacher education. A country may have all it takes to be great but without intellectual developed citizenry, achievement will development.

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