

# THE CHALLENGES OF PRODUCING EFFICIENT TEACHING MANPOWER IN NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

*Komolafe J.K.*

## **Abstract**

One of the problems confronting Nigerian education system is the challenge of training efficient and quality teaching manpower in Nigerian Colleges of Education. This paper examined these various factors and discovered the following: Poor funding, low-entry qualification, poor remuneration of lecturers in the Colleges of Education, student population explosion, politicization of education, poor conduct of Teaching Practice exercise, lack of motivation of students due to widespread unemployment etc. A number of suggestions were offered which could help to correct the present ugly situation and ensure that those who will teach our children in the future are professionally and academically trained.

## **Introduction**

Teacher education is the training given or provided in an institution to teachers to enable them acquire, inculcate and impart knowledge to their pupils or students. According to the National Policy on Education (1981) Colleges of Education are classified as belonging to a group of educational institutions categorised in Nigeria, as tertiary or higher institutions. Also included in this category are the Universities and Polytechnics/Colleges of Technology. The Universities award degrees ranging from Bachelor to Doctorate in various disciplines. The Polytechnics on the other hand award both the Ordinary and Higher Diploma in Business and Engineering disciplines while the Colleges of Education award the Nigerian Certificate in Education.

As Nigeria strives towards the attainment of excellence in the training of her citizenry, it has become pertinent to reappraise the quality of teachers, the "Nigerian Colleges of Education are producing. This appraisal is particularly relevant considering the fact that as from 1998, the NCE is to become the minimum teaching qualification in the entire Federation. According to the National Policy on Education (1998), the teachers will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning, because no education system is better than the quality of its teachers. It becomes necessary that the quality of education given to teachers must improve in order to facilitate good quality in the education system and enhance rapid national development. It further means that the quality of teacher education programme determines the quality of students.

Uche, U. W. and Onyemerekeya, C. C. (1998) had earlier affirmed that 'teacher education is a type of formalized and organised system of education for purposes of imparting knowledge to student-teachers to enable them contribute meaningfully in the education of the young ones<sup>1</sup>.

## **Purpose and Objective of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The purpose of teacher education as outline in the National Policy on Education (1981) are:

- (a) To produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- (b) To encourage further spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- (c) To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- (d) To provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world.

All these value objectives clearly tell us the nature of academic and professional preparation of the intending Nigerian teachers.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Academic staff in tertiary institutions carry out three distinct functions of teaching, research and service as highlighted by McIlister (1976) and Williams (1959). Extensive works have been done on the teaching aspect in higher institutions as cited by Cohen and Brawar, (1969), Fafunwa (1971) and Adegoke, (1990). Significant work have also been carried out on the research component of the role of academics, this include the works of Smith and Fielder

(1970). However, not much work has been done on the situation in Nigerian Colleges of Education as regards how equipped and prepared are these Colleges to produce efficient and quality teachers.

The objective of this paper therefore is to examine the adequacy or otherwise of our Colleges of Education to meet the objectives for which they were set up.

### **Some Problems Militating Against Nigerian Colleges of Education**

One of the greatest problems acting as constraint to Nigerian Colleges of Education in producing qualitative teachers is finance: Both at the Federal and State levels, the situation is the same. But the problem of poor funding is more prevalent in the state-owned Colleges of Education. As cited by Jimenyonu (1994) in the last ten years, Colleges of Education have gradually been retrogressing to a virtual point of anomy. In 1993, the climax of this age of degradation in the history of Nigerian education, the system had come to almost a standstill. In the year 2002, Colleges of Education in Osun State went on strike for four months over protest against non-payment of new salary packages. Besides, as a result of inability of the State Governments to pay the new minimum wage and implement the payment of HATISS 4, the various Colleges are being asked to source for money from their Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) to pay their staff. To meet this financial burden, most Colleges have resorted to massive admission of students by lowering standards, especially through the prelim admission.

The net effect of this has been over-crowded lecture halls, over-stretching of available and lecture rooms. Besides, the situation now is garbage-in- garbage-out.

Another significant problem besetting Nigerian Colleges of Education is the politicization of education. As cited by Emenyonu (1994) unless and until the Governments of this country remove education in all its ramifications from the "chess board" of arbitrary mundane politics, we can never have a credible system of education. Colleges of Education have been established where in fact there was no need for them and no adequate preparation made for them and no resources secured to cater for them except merely to score cheap political goal. A new State Governor wants the credit of establishing a College of Education, Polytechnic or a University usually in his village This, of course, is hurriedly done without regard to consequences and implications for human and financial resources. A communique released in 1994 by the Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) after a national delegates' conference stated among others that:

Many of The Colleges of Education nationwide are observed to be nothing more than "glorified" secondary schools in terms of infra structural facilities such as ice I lire halls, office accommodation, instructional materials and equipment, library facilities, laboratories, workshops etc.

Furthermore, while it has been recognized that teaching practice is a very important component in the professional education of teachers, its supervision has been a source of concern to many teacher educators in Nigeria like Fafunwa, (1974), Obanya (1985). In fact teaching practice has become a mockery of the real exercise. Sherman (1981) outlined some problems associated with the Teaching Practice exercise which are relevant to our experience in Nigeria. He highlighted the following:

(a) Teaching Practice is allowed the shortest period of time in the teacher preparation programme;

(b) There is the pressure of larger numbers of students to be accommodated in Teaching Practice than an educational institution can manage without, strain on its staff.

Experience in Nigerian Colleges of Education has shown that teaching practice is not properly evaluated in most institutions. Lack of motivation for the supervising staff, transport and financial problems and the large number of student-teachers assigned to each staff make it difficult for the assessment to be properly done

In addition, there is also the vexing problem of student/lecturer ratio which hinders effective teaching at the Colleges of Education. Unlike what obtains in the Universities, lecturers in the Colleges of Education, especially in the School of Education which is a service school teach between seven hundred to one thousand students in a semester. This is because, most Colleges of Education now mount programmes ranging from Pre-NCE or School of Basic Studies, to NCE Sandwich course, NCE Regular, B.Ed. Sandwich, and Full-Time B.Ed, courses. Besides, it is not unusual for the lecturers to combine two or three different courses in a semester. This is particularly significant especially when we realize that the recommended lecturer/student ratio in higher institutions is 1:35. The implication of this unfortunate situation is that, it not only makes effective teaching impossible, but it also renders it difficult for lecturers to carry out research, attend conferences, proceed for postgraduate studies and most importantly publish articles which is the yardstick for promotion.

Another major disincentive to both student and lecturers is the army of unemployed NCE graduates. For upward of fifteen to twenty years now, the Colleges of Education have been turning out NCE graduates in their thousands into the unemployed labour market. This unfortunate situation is particular rampant in the southern part of Nigeria; where the various state governments have placed embargo on employment for years.

The result is that majority of NCE graduates are forced to seek employment with private nursery primary school proprietors and proprietresses. In most cases, the proprietors/proprietresses who are mainly interested in making profit are fond of paying our NCE graduates poor salaries with no allowances. Many of the proprietors often refuse to pay the female MCE teachers once they seek maternity leave. The net impact of this ugly situation is that brilliant students usually do not want to seek admission to the Colleges of Education again, in addition, those who come into the Colleges do not see the need to study hard to develop themselves, since at the end of their course there are no encouraging job opportunities.

The various Colleges are therefore forced to admit students of poor academic ability who in most cases are not cut out for the rigours of higher institutions' academic demands. Majority of our MCE graduates in the last five years cannot express themselves in simple and correct English.

Another problem which has reduced the quality of teachers-in-training in our Colleges of Education is the conduct of examinations and attendant examination malpractices. Okonkwo (1996) observed that student misconduct has totally compromised the integrity of both the admissions and examination processes and that the moral discipline that education should impart is not acquired. For any examination to be credible, it must possess the vital psychometric properties which include validity and reliability. These key elements can only be present if examination is free and fair, devoid of partiality; cheating and all other forms of malpractices. The institutions of higher learning can no longer boldly claim to be citadels of excellence they have hitherto been noted for, in short the sanctity of examination has been trivialised.

As Emaikwu and Echuk (2001) noted, the alarming phenomenal increase in number, scope and complexity of cases of examination malpractices at the nation's apex institutions has long put the nation's educational future dangerously close to the graveyard.

Besides, another significant factor acting as a disincentive to the production of qualitative teaching manpower at the Nigerian Colleges of Education is the vexing problem of remuneration of staff. Unlike what obtains in the Universities, academic allowances of lecturers such as journals/publication allowances, conference allowances and teaching practice allowances are not paid in full. In addition, housing and car allowances which serve to boost the morale of University staff is virtually non-existent in the Colleges of Education, and where they exist at all, it usually takes between eight to ten years to qualify for the loan.

### **Suggestions/Recommendations**

Just recently President Olusegun Obasanjo remarked that Nigerian students should not focus their attention on Universities alone for their admission. He opined that out of the over one million candidates seeking admission to the Universities, the fifty three Universities in Nigeria can only admit one hundred and ten thousand of them. He therefore suggested that our students seeking admission should also consider the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education, institutions which according to him offer better job prospects.

These being the case, there is therefore the need for the Federal Government to provide additional financial support to the Colleges of Education across the country. The effort of the Education Tax Fund is a welcome development in this regard.

In addition, the various State Governments should stop playing politics with education, a situation where the State -Government will not allow the College of Education authorities to charge reasonable tuition fees because the state is implementing free education at all levels, while at the same time the Government expects the various College authorities to supplement the payment of their staff salary out of Internally Generated Revenue is unhealthy, illogical and absurd.

Besides, the Federal Government should as a matter of necessity reintroduce the payment of bursary awards to all education students in all our Colleges of Education and the Universities. These will go a long way to encourage indigent but brilliant candidates into the teaching profession.

There is also the need for the Provosts and Management of our Colleges to be patriotic and demonstrate high sense of responsibility by embarking on capital projects like construction of new lecture rooms, auditoriums, laboratories and provision of teaching facilities like public address system etc.

Finally, severe deterrent measures should be taken against culprits of examination malpractices in the Colleges, this will reduce high incidence of examination dishonesty and fraud which has reduced the credibility of certificates awarded in our institutions of higher learning.

It is the submission of this paper that except urgent measures are taken the quality of Nigerian education will continue to go down since no education can rise above the quality of its teachers.

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