

EMERGING ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined some crucial issues that, are threatening teacher education in our country. It started by describing the three related concepts of teaching, teacher and teacher education before delving into some of the issues that are undermining teacher education which also affects our development as a nation. Such issues like teaching practice, entrants, funding, corruption, institutional inadequacies, incompetent trainers among other were treated. The paper also suggested on what it taught appropriate to move teacher education forward in view of the present sorry state.

Introduction

The teacher is indispensable in national development. This is because according to Fafunwa, reported in Lassa, Anikweze and Maiyanga (1996). Teaching more than any other profession, touches the life of practically every citizen, either as students, parents, guidance or administrator and planners. To toil with the teaching profession he said, is to toil with our future. This is because it is what you sow you reap. If the teacher is poorly prepared, i.e. one that would not be able to discharge his duties effectively and efficiently will definitely affect the quality of his output.

For long now, the teacher education programme in Nigeria has been bedeviled with a wide range of problems which has affected the quality and quantity of our educational system. Many reform measures have taken place in the education sector, but none seems to have the solution to teacher education problems.

This paper is an attempt to identify and explain some of these issues and suggests what could be done to bring back the lost glory of teacher education in Nigeria.

Concept of Teaching and the Teacher

Teaching according to Moore in Baba (2007), is an action of someone who is trying to assist others to reach their fullest potentials in all aspect of development" Baba (2007), stated that through teaching, a learner is helped to move beyond his present stale of knowledge, skills or competences to such a level that his abilities can allow. In other words, the teacher's focus therefore, should go beyond the learner accepting what the teacher says but to understand it in such a way that he can critically examine it, stressing that it is a developmental process through which the learner realizes his potentials. If is an encounter between the teacher and the learner.

Teachers are those who carry out this task of helping learners to develop to their fullest potential through carrying out three distinct roles of instructing, managing and counseling. (Baba, 2007: 11). He is specifically selected, trained and educated for the job of dispensing knowledge to others according to their capabilities (Moduewesi and Eya 2007:7). In the words of Okorie (1989), it is one who guides pupils through planned activities so that they may acquire the richest learning possible from their experience.

The understanding here, is that a teacher is a person who obtained training in the art of teaching in an accredited institution, under the guidance of qualified and experienced teachers. In other words, for one to be a teacher, he/she would have undergone a prescribed training to be able to execute his task of leading others to know. To function well in this task, teaching requires expertise which only the professionally prepared and educated teacher can deliver. Many who go by the name teacher today, cannot be regarded as such because they lack the basic knowledge skills and competences which teaching demands. And to qualify as a professional teacher, requires that the teacher have to be a learner through retraining and updating knowledge in teacher-education programmes (Maduewesi and Ofojebe, 2006:8).

Teacher Education

Teacher education is an aspect of the education system that specializes in education and training of would-be teachers to enable them acquire the relevant knowledge, competencies and skills with which to practice as professional teachers. Denga, in Maduewesi and Eya (2007:9) defined teacher education as the process of preparing or developing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to effectively direct learning situations. The aim is to produce well qualified professional and trained teachers that can cope with the needs and capabilities of the learner. Mbakwem (2005), on his own part, defined teacher education as encompassing all such programmes which are designed to give professional training particularly to those who will be engaged in teaching and generally to those who

will be involved in other professional activities of education. The last definition has become important because the education environment contains other related and relevant professionals who require training in teacher education to be able to effectively discharge their duties. For instance, educational administrators, supervisors, guidance counselors. These are not directly working in the classroom but collaborate with the teacher for success in the classroom. Explaining further, Ipaye, in Lassa et al (1996), says teacher education is charged with developing knowledge and skills as basis for practice with preparing personnel for entry into a profession (Pre-Service) and with contributing to the on-going developmental practicing professionals (in-service).

From the above, it could be seen that teacher education is the hallmark of the education system in any country, Nigeria inclusive. That may have been why the Federal Government of Nigeria categorically stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004:39), that since no education system rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. It went further to promise that teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. To actualize such strong policy statement, the National Policy on Education (2004:39),

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J> pimhh*¹. highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of **our educational** system.

- b) To encourage furt'it-r Mir spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c) To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- d) To. provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations
To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.
- e)

As laudable as these goals may be, whether they have been able to achieve the objectives is a subject of another discussion. However, what is very glaring is that teacher education is replete with numerous problems. Supporting this, Afe (1998), says that the problem with teacher education objectives is that sometimes, they are at variance with what goes on in practice concluding that there seems to exist different objectives for teacher education according to the certificates to be awarded to the student-teacher among others. He noted that, despite the probable differences, what is required is the systematic transformation of these objectives in relation to the type of teacher education expected in our present day Nigeria. This suggests that the types of teacher education required in the present dispensation is the types that is capable of -equipping the teacher with the basic knowledge, skills and competencies geared towards achieving national objectives and meeting the individual needs of the Nigerian citizen

Emerging Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria

1. Practical Teaching:- There is no gain saying that practical teaching popularly known as "teaching practice" is a sine qua non for an effective teacher education programme. It provides student-teachers with the opportunity for practical experience in the classroom teaching (Nwoke, in Oyetunde, Mallum and Andzayi 2004). It is a period in the training programme when a student is sent to a school and given specific functions to perform as a teacher under the supervision of more experienced teachers. It is a period when student- teacher examines how theories learnt in the class through the cause of the training are translated into practice with the sole aim of inculcating in them various practical skills and habits which will facilitate learning and achievements.

However, we must admit the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult for teacher training institution to carry out this exercise properly and adequately to actually achieve the desired goals to improve training and practical experience in classroom teaching, due to numerous problems. Nwoke in Oyetunde et al (2004), enumerated these problems as population of the trainee that cannot be easily absorbed into school in the locality, durational approaches for teaching practice by different *training institutions in Nigeria, uncertain school calendar, lack of practicing schools, lack of poor cooperating teachers and incompetent supervisors among others. Such problems may make it difficult if not impossible for student-teachers to actually acquire the teaching skills envisaged by the exercise, yet they are certified as haven completed the exercise, the basis of which they are certificated.*

2.Entrants/Low Enrolment to the Programme: Many of the students that opted for teacher

education are always left-overs from universities and polytechnics matriculation examinations. Those who failed to meet their requirements would have to settle for College of Education. It is difficult though not impossible to get those who actually desired to teach as a first choice.

Any bright student would want to go to the university or polytechnic not to read education, but when they come out without any job in their chosen field, would now go for leaching often with nine months diploma in education even when the University of Nigeria Nsukka in a conference in 1961, 37 years ago, agreed that a degree plus a nine-months diploma course was an unsatisfactory method for preparing graduate teachers and that (those teachers so produced, lacked dedication and professional aptitude... In fact, many of such are dominating Colleges of Education today with one year diploma in education or technical teachers' certificate in education, polluting the system as teachers. The situation is worrisome because they are engaged in supervision of students in most Colleges of Education and many lack the expertise and experience. This has further compounded our teacher education programme. The result is that student-teachers enrolment is always low in tertiary institutions while practicing teachers' figure is always at the increase with non-professionals dominating.

3. **Non-Retention of Trained Teacher:-** Many of those who trained as teachers abandon the job for a better options. The implication of this according to Ezeani, in Maduewesi and Eya (2006:22), is that teacher education institutions continue without an end, to produce teachers who come and go into other professions. They also create gaps in the classrooms and subject areas, depending on levels of education.

4. **Funding/Corruption;** A good teacher education programme requires huge sums of money to run it. Educational technology, information communication technologies, micro-teaching labs and equipments require very huge sums of money to purchase and equip them for practical and novel techniques and strategies in teacher preparation.

Inability of the appropriate agencies to provide the required funds has left the training institutions with the option of preparing the trainees mainly through theoretical approaches. Theoretical experience alone will hamper the growth and development of the teachers so trained as Fahunmi (1999), observed that mere acquisition of book knowledge is not enough to enter into the classroom.

On the other hand, corruption on the part of the heads of such institutions and their supervising ministries is another source of regret. The little funds that are made available had hardly been used judiciously by the heads of these training institutions. Such funds are diverted to projects that will accrue the required 10% (Due process notwithstanding) to the detriment of viable and relevant projects.

5. **Institution and Trainers:** One other problem that is affecting the teacher education programme is that of institutions and personnel involved in the training. Some institutions that are training teachers today, at the level of diploma and certificate in education do not have required facilities and manpower resources to execute the job. They end up producing certificated quacks as teachers to worsen the already weak standard of education. Many of the personnel involved are not with the requisite qualification, knowledge, competences, skills and experience required of a teacher trainer.

Even universities that are offering affiliate programmes do not bother to monitor what goes on in their affiliate schools to the extent that some products of these institutions are very poor have used unacceptable means to pass their examination leading to certification.

While we appreciate the fact that people should protect their jobs by heeding to the policy directive that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained and that those without professional qualifications shall be given a period within which to qualify or leave the profession (NPE 2004:35); we should also realize that a mistake by a teacher is costlier than the Doctor's or the Engineer's mistake hence, the need to streamline the institutions that are training teachers and the caliber of personnel involved in (the training as obtained in other professions).

Suggestions

1. Institutions training teachers should organize real teaching practice where student-teachers will be exposed to practical experiences in classroom situation drawing the experiences supervisors will provide the trainee in lesson preparation and presentation, effective use of instructional materials, and classroom organization, evaluation, school record, communication skills and

- teacher's personality etc.
2. Let the teaching profession be made attractive to encourage the best trainees and retain those who would have left to other place.
 3. Public and private schools should stop the employment of those who have not read education to teach in our education training institution and in the ordinary classroom. This will help to employ those who actually qualified as professional teachers as against the present practice. Seeing that teaching jobs are given to (those who read education will encourage more people to enroll in teacher education programmes.
 4. The National Teachers' institute Kaduna should stop its programme of teacher education and concentrate on/y on the production of instructional materials. All those in its programmes should be made to go for formal schooling in the approved institutions to acquire the relevant knowledge and skills. All distance teachers' grade If, NCE, PTP and STUP are not what we require at this moment of our teacher education.
 5. Funds should be made available for the purchase of training material to enhance effective teacher preparation.
 6. About 40% of Nigerian children are into private schools. These schools employ the service of unprofessional teachers to the detriment of our children. Therefore, government should legislate against the use, of such people in any school in the country to teach. Rather, arrangement should be made to supply private schools with qualified teachers at reasonable price.
 7. A total overhaul of the teacher education programme is imperative in view of emerging issues in the sector like the issue of preparing teachers specifically for all levels of education being proposed by NCCE, Early Childhood Education and (the 9 year basic education etc.
 8. Back to school: Teachers in the field should be made to go back for short time re-training in new methods, implementation of innovations, new practices and strategies etc.

Conclusion

Teacher education programmes in Nigeria are expected to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all the levels of education, in addition, it should enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession (Maduewesi and Ofojebe, in Maduewesi and Eya 2006:12). Unfortunately, these goals have not been fully achieved due to certain factors that work against such noble goals as has been highlighted in the paper. Possible ways of moving forward have also been highlighted too, while calling on all stakeholders to join hands so that we can accomplish the task of educating the future educators

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