

TEACHER EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING THE SEVEN (7) POINT AGENDA IN NIGERIA

Sango Abdul

Abstract

This paper started with an explanation on the concept teacher education. There after traces the historical development of teacher education in Nigeria. The paper further gave a structural description of the seven point agenda and stated whether the agenda has been achieved or otherwise. The paper lastly posited that teach education in the only instrument for achieving the seven (7) point agenda for national development.

Introduction

Education has undoubtedly become a vehicle for socio-economic religions, cultural and political transformation; a veritable means for national development in all its ramification, and an indispensable instrument per excellence for achieving not only the seven point agenda but for diverse elements that constitute Nigeria.

Education can be referred to as the most powerful weapon in the words because no nation in the world over has ever attained fame or a particular height in terms of educational ideals. Since education is a formidable force to be recon with, in the overall development of mankind and his environment, it cannot be handled with levity because it is a global issue.

Based in the importance of education, Nigeria has chosen education as the most reliable instrument for national development. If this instrument has to be used meaningfully, the hubs in the wheels of educational process must be properly planned. This is because good educational system can usher in an amiable change in the citizens of the nation, who will in turn change the face of the country for better, both in technology and the economy and this is possible only through teacher education which is the only foundation quality in any formal education process. Recognizing the import if teacher education as the fountain-head of the education process, the national policy or education (zoom) provides that no education system can ribe above the quality of its teachers.

The Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is an important aspect of education where, teachers are given pre-service teacher preparatory upgrading of academic qualification and in device continuing professional development in area of specialization. It could be seen as a programme or programmes put in place for the training of training of teachers for the realization of the educational needs of a country.

Okafor (1988), defines teacher education “as the formal systematic and organized training programme geared towards production of a crop of required manpower (teachers) to implement the planned and developed curriculum of school in a society”

The federal government on the realization of the importance of teacher education, had specified in the national policy education (2004), section (b) that since no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teacher education, needs proper planning an development”. It also stated categorically that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)

It maintained that:

- All teacher in educational institutions shall be professionally trained
- Teacher education programme shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties.
- Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of change in methodology and in curriculum.
- Teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession.
- In service training shall be created to allow for professional growth at each level.
- Effort will be made towards the improvement of the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels (source N.P.E., 2004) the objectives of teacher education thus.

The Goals of Teacher Education shall be 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 society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- d. provide teacher 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. The aims of teacher education show that the aims and objectives of education show that the aims and objective of education cannot be accomplished without the role of the teacher. There is hardly any sector of the economy and spheres of development that does not require the expertise of an educated person. An educated person is one who possesses a body of knowledge and understanding principles of transformation, commitment and care and one who can develop principles for the transfer of learning, with a sense of standard and prudence. A teacher is the architect who designs the super structure on which education revolves. A teacher is the teacher education becomes necessary for the achievement of any programme not only seven point agenda.

Teacher Education in Nigeria: An Over-view

Teacher education in the formal sense started in Nigeria in 1859 when the church missionary society established a teacher training college in Abeokuta. This college, according to Adewole (1996), was moved to Lagos in 1867, when the missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta and relocated to Oyo as St. Andrew's college in 1896. It was an all-male institution and fully residential. The Baptist mission probably spurred by the Church missionary society's example established a Baptist teacher training college in Ogbomoso in 1897. Elsewhere in Nigeria, the Presbyterian church of Scotland in 1861, established the Hope Waddell training institute in Calabar. The institute was not an exclusively teacher training institute, but rather provided training for primary school teachers to become preachers, tradesmen and teachers, it was thus a seminary, trade centre and teacher training college rolled into one. Formal teacher training did not start early in the Northern States. The earliest such attempt was under the auspices of Hanns Visoles, Director of education, northern Nigeria, who established a teacher training college in Nasarawa in 1909.

During the 19th century, the training of teacher was the exclusive preserve of the Christian mission, which gave teacher education a religious colouring and their aim is to produce teacher-catechists for the purpose of Christian evangelism. There was therefore the need for government intervention and the colonial government did intervene by taking a measure of control over the training of teachers. The colonial government promulgated a memorandum on education 1925 and in 1928, the Phelps Stokes commission was set up. The commission's recommendation led to a two tier teacher education programme for primary school teacher thus:

The Elementary training college (ETC), this produced teachers who dispensed teaching at the lower forms of primary schools. They were known as grade III teacher training college. This produced teachers who dispensed teaching at the lower forms of primary schools. They were known as GRADE III teacher. The training lasted two years. The higher Elementary training college, produced teachers who manned the higher I on elementary classes. Much later, the Grade I teacher's certificate was introduced for ambitious Grade II teacher willing to upgrade their professional status. There was a yawning need to produce teachers for secondary schools, which has started increasing in number. In 1932, the Yaba Higher College was established and this college, which was science and technology based, offered among other courses, a three year diploma in education, thus producing science teachers for secondary education.

Concerned about the paucity of higher education in Nigeria, the Government set up the Ashby commission (1959-1960) with a mandate to "conduct an investigation into Nigerians needs in the field of post-school certificate and higher education over the next twenty years" (FGN 1960:2).

The commission was particularly critical of the quality of teachers teaching in secondary schools, claiming that about half of the teachers at this level were "not adequately or fully training for their work". The commission thereafter recommended the expansion of the intermediate teacher training colleges to produce teachers for secondary school. A fallout of this recommendation was the

establishment of advanced teacher's college in the early 1960s and now called colleges of education and producing Nigerian certificate of education (NCE) teachers. These teachers were at the inception of advanced teachers colleges/college of education expected to teach in junior secondary schools. However, with the national policy on Education specifying that the Nigeria Certificate in Education shall be the minimum teaching qualification, these college have positively responded to this policy provision. There are currently 67 Colleges of Education in Nigeria offering courses leading to the award of the NCE. Some of these colleges offer degree programme in education.

The Seven (7) Point Agenda

The seven (7) point agenda came into being on 1st August,2007 by the present (Yar, Adua) regime as its own reform policy of the new administration. The seven point agenda are shown below:

1. **Power and Energy:** To develop an adequate power supply so as to ensure Nigeria ability to develop as a modern economy by the year 2015.
2. **Food Security:** Emphasis is on the development of modern technology, research, finance injection into research, production of agricultural inputs leading to a 5-10 fold increase in yields and production.
3. **Wealth Creation:** This is focused on wealth creation through diversified production especially in the agricultural and solid mineral sector.
4. **Transportation:** To develop capacity for mass movement of goods and people.
5. **Land Reform:** To provide proper ownership and give chance to take the land to capital market.
6. **Security:** The security will be seen as necessary infrastructure for national development of modern Nigeria economy.
7. **Education:** The reforms in the education sector are supposed to achieve to minimum acceptable international standards for all. With that achieved, a strategic education and development plan will ensure excellence in both the tutoring and learning of skills in science and technology.

It is not a new thing in Nigeria, that when a new administration in sworn into office, they always come up with same new policy. The experience of the war against indiscipline (WAI), structural adjustment programme (SAP) introduced by Bahuri and Babangida administration respectively, is still fresh in our memories. Obasanjo's regime came up with the fight against corruption crusade. The question we want to ask ourselves is that how far have they gone which the achievement of these policies?

Achievement of the Seven Point Agenda so Far

We will take each point one by one, after two years, has for has this regime gone toward achievement of the agenda?

Power and energy: Presently the electric energy output of the country is roughly 200mw out of a total capacity of 6000mw which they have never reached (daily trust 5th March 2010). The maximum they have reached so far is 4200mw which dropped to 2500mw last month. As a result many factories are closed leading to mass lay-off or workers and consequently unemployment.

Food security: Nigeria is an agricultural nation with over 60% of her workforce engaged in farming. How on earth are we going to achieve a 5 to 10 fold increase in yields and production when the majority of our farmers still use the old implements, lacks fertilizer inputs? This has caused agriculture to fail to keep to with Nigeria's rapid population growth.

Wealth creation: The lack of adequate power supply and the rate of which our factories are folding up, one wonders how Mr. President can achieve this Agenda.

Transportation: Transportation is a requirement for every nation. There can not serious economic growth without a good and efficient transportation system. But in Nigeria most of the roads today are death traps, making movement people and goods difficult.

Land reforms: Instead of the government taking up the land, developing it for housing estate and making affordable for ordinary people to rent or buy, what they do is to allocate to their friends, sons, the rich, their relatives and their party Fathers etc. This days land is never allocated to ordinary people.

Security: How can this government guarantee security of life and properties for its citizens, when a majority of her able man and women have no jobs? Our country is currently highly volatile with hostage taking, religious and ethnic violence occurring on a daily basis e.g. Jos and Niger Delta etc. Even the security agents that are supposed to ensure security are equally involved in armed robbery etc.

Education: Education is the bedrock of any development. The present state of education in Nigeria is pathetic and quality is disaster. There are crumbling infrastructures, grossly inadequate facilities, poor funding, non-availability of laboratories/computers, and problems of examination malpractice that has grown into a monster (tell Feb. 26,2008).

In view of the above, the achievement of the seven point agenda is not possible. Therefore, teacher education is an only option open to the government in order to achieve the seven point agenda.

Teacher Education as the Instrument for Achieving the Seven Point Agenda.

Reforms are essential for improving the society or nation. Education which is considered as the bedrock of any development, serves as a veritable vehicle for all forms of reforms-politically, economically, socially, religiously, security, culturally etc. This is in view of what Ukeje (1996) posits, that Nigeria can make use of the tremendous power of education, through teacher education to tackle her numerous problems, such as ethnicity, indiscipline, corruption, and greed and by so doing, achieve rapid national development.

Since the mission of teacher education in Nigeria is to produce highly motivated, skilled, professionally competent and development oriented teachers who would be effective Agents of national development (Nwole, 1995; 2002), teachers at all levels of the educational system should be conversant with the new initiatives of government. Therefore, teachers by the nature of their calling, inculcate societal values and norms into a nation's youth. Teachers are therefore at the vanguard of bringing about reforms in national polity. Therefore the achievement of the seven point Agenda will duly be possible through teacher education.

Teacher education equips the teacher to provide the enabling environment needed for a child to attain his full potential. Thus, teacher education should be the arrow-head and the spirit of the achievement of any developmental programme so that it can be in harmony with our national aspiration for development. No doubt, the development of any nation depends on the human resources the nation is endowed with, and the human resources are inexorably tied to education dispensed by the teachers. Teacher education is therefore invariably the yardstick to measure a nation's development.

Good teacher dispense good teaching, which in turn produces good quality workforce, engineers, medical doctors, architects, lawyers, etc. all working towards the achievement of national goal, that is national development. Since the seven (7) agenda are our national goals, the only instrument through which it can be achieved is through teacher education

Conclusion

Teacher education is the hub of the education enterprise and the pivot of national development. The achievement of the seven point agenda calls for a cursory look at the status of teacher education in Nigeria. Since it is generally agreed that no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers, it then means that teachers should be empowered in knowledge, skills, values etc. In order to usher in an amiable change in the citizens who will in turn change the face of the country for better both in technology and the economy. Successive governments bring one agenda and change it with another as witnessed so far, but can never be achieved if appropriate investment in teacher education so as to ensure good standard education for national development. This is because where teacher education is relegated to the background, the nation's development is stunted. Teacher education is thus the harbinger of national development.

Recommendations

Teachers are the producers of manpower of all sectors; therefore no nation can prosper without sufficient number of qualified teachers. Below are some recommendations that can help in well trained, highly motivated, conscientious teachers that served as an instrument for achieving the seven (7) point agenda in Nigeria.

Teacher Education as an Instrument for Achieving the Seven (7) Point Agenda in Nigeria

1. Good candidate must be selected of teacher education programmes
2. In-service training should be provided regularly for teachers development.
3. Adequate provision of modern teaching facilities
4. Provision of infrastructural facilities.
5. The minimum standard of the national commission for colleges of education should be strictly adhered to, to ensure unqualified teachers are not recruited in to the teaching profession
6. Adequate finding of the education sector.

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