

# FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DELAY IN THE FULL PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

Teacher effectiveness can better be enhanced by the full professionalization of teaching. The role that a professional teacher can play in national development cannot be over-emphasized. This paper examined the meaning of profession, its characteristics, what teaching is and some factors that are responsible for the delay in the full professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. The latter includes: poor recognition and enrolment of teachers by the teachers registration council, low status or prestige occupation, inadequate training, lack of esoteric knowledge, absence of a life-long vocation, poor management of the NUT and lack of autonomy by the "Teachers. It has therefore become urgent and imperative that the government of this country should wake up to ensure full professionalization of teaching bearing in mind that teacher education is very paramount to national development.

## Introduction

The future of any nation depends on the quality of its educational system which in turn depends on the quality of teachers. The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that no nation can rise above the level of its teaching staff show the role of teachers and teacher education programmes in national development. Ukeje (2000), stated that education is so powerful that "it can heal or kill; it can build up or tear apart; it can lift up or impoverish." This being the case, teacher education must come at the top of every list of priorities concerned with education and training of teachers because the services of the teacher are indispensable to the survival of any nation. The teacher touches lives in so many ways. To treat the teaching profession with levity is to damn our own future, for a poorly trained and unsure teacher will likely reproduce a poor doctor, engineer, architect and the likes. The desired national goal is for better development. It is the aim of this paper to identify and discuss some factors that are responsible for the delay in the full professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. There is no doubt that when teaching in Nigeria attains its full professionalization, the national goals and objectives will be achieved. This calls for adequate attention to be given to teacher education in this nation through full professionalization of teaching. By so doing, the future of education in this country can indeed become brighter and Nigeria can then hope to take her rightful place as a key player in the global village.

## Meaning of Profession

A profession according to Etim (1998), is a calling requiring specialized knowledge and often a long and intensive academic preparation. The criteria of a profession include a process of formal training; a body of specialized knowledge; procedure for certifying and validating membership of the profession and a set of standards of performance (intellectual, practical and ethical) that are defined and enforced by the members of the profession. The New English Dictionary and Thesaurus (2000), define profession as an occupation requiring specialized knowledge and often long and intensive academic preparation. Good (1973), in Ikediugwu (2005)', defines profession as an occupation usually involving relatively long and specialized preparation on the level of higher education and governed by its own code of ethics. In TRCN (2005), professionalism is seen as the most primary and fundamental need of any vocation that wishes to deliver qualitative services to society and has its members well respected and remunerated.

## Characteristics of a Profession

Looking at the above definitions, Aguba (2006) and Ikediugwu (2005), identified characteristics of profession among others to be:

- Members of a specific profession are subjected to long period of specialization before they become professionalized. Most lawyers, physicians, pharmacists, accountants and soon have specialized knowledge of their field, otherwise they cannot be registered with their professional bodies. To study medicine in Nigeria, it takes 7 good years, pharmacy 6 years, engineering 5 years, architecture 5 years and law 6years. Looking at the average years of specialization, it takes 6 years of training to undergo a professional course in Nigeria.
- Profession requires activities that are predominantly intellectual with members possessing specialized esoteric knowledge. When a medical doctor prescribes drugs, only the para-medical can decode the prescription.

- There is always a high standard for admission and the candidates pass through rigorous processes.
- Profession can be seen as a life-long vocation or career; members make a living through it and it also affords its practitioners permanent memberships.
- There is a strong organization that is generally recognized as being able to speak for all members within the profession. It is the responsibility of professional organizations to draw a code of ethics which all members must subscribe to and uphold with an oath. Majasan (1995), further pointed out that the ethics of any profession can be seen as standards of conduct or an embodiment of the do's and don'ts of the profession. Any member who flouts any of the ethics more than once or twice may stand expelled and his license to practice withdrawn by the professional organization.
- Members enjoy a wide range of autonomy and assert the professional standards as a basis for taking decisions or actions concerning individual issues which bear on the subject area for which they are accredited as competent.
- Members of a profession show high priority to service as opposed to personal gain. The work should be service-oriented and should be to the interest of the public.
- There should be professional journals of which latest issue concerning the professional is contained.
- Every profession commands a wide range of public respect or social prestige.
- It should demand continuous in-service growth and provide members opportunities for that.

### **What Is Teaching?**

A simple definition of teaching is "the guidance of learning activities". Teaching is a service profession and a teacher guides learning by motivating the learner or by arousing his desire to learn. By stimulating the learner and giving him the opportunity to ask questions, the teacher helps him to establish goals. Teaching is more than telling and testing. It is a complex art guiding the pupils through a variety of selected experiences of bringing about worthwhile changes in behaviour. Teaching is supposed to result in the acquisition and utilization of knowledge. The teacher is to see that the child develops the right skills, estimates the facts, right habits, ideals and ethical standards.

Teachers are further seen as those who give information about a subject and help others to learn. Gelinas (1965), says that the professional teacher is one who makes his living by teaching in the schools. Sharp (1957), reasons that the teacher is a key figure in the process of guiding children in their experiences, for it is he who has direct and prolonged contact with them. They influence the development of personality and character. Majasan. (1995), reckons that teachers are the leaders of all the other participators in the upbringing of a refined generation and the most potent factor in organizing the processes involved.

To Balogun (1981), the teachers job does not stop at teaching effectively and efficiently. He is a model as his pupils look at him as a mirror and as an instrument of learning. Not only does what he says matters, what he does also matters. His ability to give objectional habits and adopts certain virtues necessary to his calling is of paramount importance Ukeje (1996), adds that the teacher ultimately depends on the realization of the aims of education, in the final analysis he determines the actual learning experiences that will go on in the classroom. In the process of social reconstruction or the building of a new nation, teachers are as it were, the builders of builders.

The ultimate realization of the role of education,' therefore, depends in no small measure, on the quality of teachers' education. Effective leaching throughout the ages has contributed immensely to the well being of society. The teacher lays the moral foundation on which good citizenship is built and he is the foremost architect in nation building. The National Policy on Education (2004), further stressed that education is an instrument for national development and since no education system may rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.

### **Delay in the Full Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria**

The National Policy on Education (2004), sees teaching as a profession that needs to be legally and publicly recognized. Section 8B paragraphs 70, 72 and 78 put it that:

" All Teachers in education institutions shall be professionally trained with the minimum qualification of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). Government has set up the Teachers' Registration Council to control and regulate the practice of the profession. Those already engaged in teaching but not professionally qualified shall serve be given a period of time within which to qualify for registration or leave the profession. Newly qualified

teachers shall a period of internship for one (1) year for degree holders and two (2) years for NCE holders.

The Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), concluded that by the end of December, 2006 all those who have not acquired requisite qualifications will leave the profession. According to TRCN (2005), a teacher is a person who has undergone approved professional training in education at appropriate levels capable of impacting knowledge, attitudes and skills to the learner. Teachers according to TRCN has been categorized according to qualification.

SN	Category	Qualification
1	A	ph.D. in Education ph.D. plus Education or equivalent
2	B	Masters in Education Masters plus Education or equivalent
3	C	First Degree in Education First Degree plus Education or Equivalent
4	D	NCE or its Equivalent

Source TRC Manual (2002) pp 12 - 13.

Tafida (2005), agreed on what the policy has stipulated but the real question however is; How many Nigerians are genuinely interested in having their names on the Teachers Register? We still have a situation in which very few of the teachers in the country are teachers by choice, too many of them are "half baked", as they have been trained through crash programmes. According to Aguha (2006), the quality and quantity of teachers in Nigerian schools is generally inadequate to effect the type of education necessary in a fast developing technological society. The most serious defect has to do with the poor quality of the teaching staff in terms of their values, intellectual development and their orientation. Nigerian education is seriously affected by the type of people who opt to teach, the type of preparation they receive, the type of preparation they receive; the type of people recruited to teach and the conditions under which they serve.

The situation is such that there is no way anyone could call teaching a profession, since high percentage of the teaching force in the country, especially in the northern parts with a concentration of schools teachers, are either untrained or semi-trained. Most of the private schools are equally not left out. However, the Federal Government in a wise move to remedy the situation, set up the National Teachers Institute at Kaduna. The major objective of this institute is the improvement of the quality of unqualified teachers and the introduction of a system of continuous quality control of education in the country. Many Nigerians often criticize our teacher education programmes for being overloaded with theory and abstract learning. Understandably, according to Nwosu (2001), our teachers are criticized for lacking the skills and competences expected from modern professional teachers.

Fafunwa (1969), has it that, if teaching is to become a respectable profession, like other learned professions, the Nigerian qualified teacher, should possess a minimum of an NCE certificate to enter the teaching profession at the lowest level.

Teaching profession in Nigeria has been a low status or prestige occupation. The teacher in many cases is still looked upon with mixed feelings of pity and respect and Adesina (1977), noted that. pity and respect do not mix well. Fagbamiye (1981), pointed out that teachers are not highly regarded in Nigeria. There is poor public image of teachers. The entry of untrained personnel into the profession has not helped matters. Teaching for long has been regarded by many as a stepping-stone to something else and some people enter teaching only if they have failed to gain a civil service job with an industrial firm or sonic other big company. Most people entering into teaching are not committed and would leave at the slightest opportunity. This is why other established professions do not see teaching as satisfying the criteria of a profession.

Okebukola (2000) and Tafida (2005), went further to say that the most fundamental problem of teacher education in Nigeria is the negative attitude and lack of interest in the teaching profession amongst the generality of Nigerians. Most teachers where they have an option, would hardly choose the teaching profession for their children. Even at the tertiary level, the practitioners prefer not to be classified as teachers but as lecturers. At the secondary and primary schools levels, teachers prefer to be called as Uncles and Aunties. The reason for this attitude is because the Nigerian society today sees the teacher as a second rate

professional. Many students who populate the faculties of education cannot be said to have been motivated to become professional teachers on graduation but merely by a desire to possess a university degree.

Adequate training is necessary to make a teacher a specialist and professionally competent to face his job. In preparing or training to be a teacher, one must not be overweighed by the feeling of being in the wrong place or that he is only playing out an emergency role. The institutions for the training of teachers should be able to weed the thorns from the good crop into a harvest of highly dedicated and qualified teachers. The mode of entry into the teaching profession is one of the most serious problems plaguing teacher education programmes in the nation. According to Omoregie (2006), the NCE programmes in Colleges of Education draw their intakes from less bright secondary school leavers who would in no way get admission into other tertiary institutions because of poor academic qualifications. The few above average students found in educational institutions are there because they had no admission somewhere else. It is worse with the universities. Aguba (2006), further pointed out that faculties such as Medicine, Law and Pharmacy admit students with the best grades in the JAMB examinations.

All planning and training must allow for changes and must keep pace with social, economic and technological advancement as a developing country like Nigeria is experiencing a technological revolution in education. Akudoiu (1997), notes that the technological revolution in education requires a change in the status quo. It calls for curriculum review of teacher training programmes. A teaching force that can manage opportunities offered by technology is needed. To achieve this, teachers have to recognize and play the new roles imposed on them by technology.

Bruder (1990) and Rhodes (1990), reiterate that teachers are custodians of knowledge as they' play the role of lecturers, and purveyors of information. With the technological revolution in education, teachers should also assume the role of developers and managers of learning, researchers, mentors, facilitators, advisers and long-range planners. To play these roles effectively, Taiwo (1985), pointed out that teachers should be re-trained at intervals by means of short courses. Subject specialists should have a good knowledge of their subjects in breadth and depth and acquire up-to-date methods of teaching them. Liverpool (2004) and Mohammed (2004), pointed out that if the status of the Nigerian teacher is to be improved, teachers need to update their knowledge because of the; rapid increase in the body of knowledge, advances in pedagogical science and the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Teachers should be given opportunity to benefit from study leave with pay, in-service training, seminars, conferences and refresher courses, on a regular basis to enhance job proficiency and renewed commitment.

Osuji (1995), decries that teaching in Nigeria is yet to assume professional status as most Nigerian teachers lack effective participation in decision-making in vital educational matters relating to their job, curriculum planning and implementation. Some government 'top' officials in the education sector are not experts and as such causes obstacles to teaching attaining full professional status. There are professional languages and styles (esoteric knowledge) which somebody from another profession will find it difficult to understand. Ocho (1988), is of the opinion that if an engineer makes mistake, a house or bridge may collapse, if a doctor makes a mistake, a patient may die, if a lawyer makes a mistake, a case may be lost, but if a teacher makes mistake, it will circulate the whole nation. Mistakes made by professional teachers in the teaching profession have contributed a lot to the low standard of education in Nigeria because you cannot give what you do not have.

Planners of the educational curriculum should therefore, note that teaching practice is a cardinal aspect of all teacher education programmes. There should be uniform period of at least one full year of the experience like other professional disciplines during which they should be groomed in the methods and techniques of the profession under experienced teachers (mentors). A stipend should be paid to these teacher-trainees while in practice. This accounts more for professional achievement of teachers. There is the need to put Nigerian Teacher Education on the path of competitiveness and strengthen it to compete favourably within the global system.

According to Ololobou (2003), haphazard conduct of teaching practice exercise is carried out in some teacher training colleges. The period for the exercise varies from institutions, ranging from a period of two to six weeks except for long vacation periods. The period is too short for the students to be prepared before releasing them into the school system. The supervision of this programme is another area of inadequacy.

Some students are visited only once and some twice. Some of these student-teachers cannot write good lesson notes. The worst is that hardly has there been a situation where a student is held behind because of poor performance in teaching practice.

Furthermore as seen by Okebukola (2004) and Liverpool (2002), most of these teacher-trainees, when pushed-out, are faced with serious problem of the 'role model' to emulate. The teaching and learning conditions are not favourable. Classrooms and other infrastructures need to be refurbished. Adequate teaching aids are not available. The ratio of students to materials is always inadequate. A classroom capacity of not more than 50 students will be jammed with over 80 - 100 students. Most science laboratories are not equipped with chemicals, so that practicals are far-fetched. Most modern technology according to Ngada (2001), teaches the use of computer with Internet, video conferencing and teleconferencing and even the overhead projector in teaching. These devices are not there to equip the student-teacher well for the practical exercise. How then will these student-teachers cope on graduation as professionals? Looking at the situation of the Nigerian teacher and the trainee Isyuku (2002), reconnected that considering the technologies, constantly emerging in the new century, there is need to review and re-define the whole area of principles and practice of education in the light of the new technologies. Outside the teaching practice exercise experienced in the course of training, there is no doubt that a lot still has to be done to ensure quality in teaching profession. Teachers should have a period of internship like doctors, lawyers and so on during which they get groomed in the methods and techniques of their profession under experienced teachers. Adesina (1983), pointed out that educators have to teach by example and precept and raise a generation that will appreciate education as a lifelong occupation.

If teachers can make a living through teaching as profession and enjoy it as a lifelong vocation or career, the conditions of service of Nigerian teachers must be improved. According to Aguba (2006), teachers' salaries and allowances are very meager and most irregular. Some teachers are owed for more than four months by their irresponsible governments. Such 'certificated'<sup>1</sup> but uneducated government officials tend to forget that a hungry teacher is an angry teacher. Motivation of teachers is very low. Mohammed (2004), pointed out, that there is no job security in the teaching profession. Teachers are often retired or dismissed at will. Their postings at times do not follow official procedures. Retirement benefits and gratuities are often delayed. Teachers are not often promoted as and when due. They are rarely appointed into any meaningful positions(s) in government or considered for special awards.

Okebukola (2002), further stressed that non-payment of the salaries and emoluments of teachers has brought untold hardships to many Nigerian teachers. Furthermore, Aguba (2006), observed that some teachers lack job satisfaction because their physiological needs are rarely met let alone their secondary needs. It becomes so clear that an unmotivated teacher hardly shows love to his students. Ofoegbu (2004), supported by agreeing that teachers need to be adequately motivated especially in this era of materialism and display of wealth, to achieve an effective viable school system. Nigerian teachers should therefore not be neglected. Obi (1997), pointed out that an average worker does not necessarily get motivated by monetary incentives but by other variables that are related to the work environment. So many teachers today are accommodated in a common staff room while their counter-parts in the ministries with similar qualifications enjoy well-furnished air-conditioned offices with personal aids. Most teachers today have no tables, seats and the like. Nwagwu (1981), decries that all these have resulted to the alleged fall in educational standards. Teaching profession blames the situation on the government, which it accuses of not equipping the schools and not producing conditions of service conducive to the recruitment and retention of high caliber dedicated teachers.

There is a strong organization that is generally recognized as being able to speak for all members within the profession. This organization emphasizes the ideals of service above personal gains. The Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) is a professional organization and a trade union, for it serves to promote and protect the conditions of employment of all teachers in Nigeria. It is the responsibility of the NUT in Nigeria to draw a code of ethics which all members must subscribe to and uphold with an oath. One of the important functions of the professional organization is the involvement of the organization in the admission, training and certification of new members. One is not sure how far the NUT is meeting these requirements in Nigeria. Fagbamiye (1981), notes that any 'teacher' can join the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and this body has no control over entrants into the profession nor can it regulate the length of training required for registration as a teacher nor bar those who can barely read and write, from entering the profession. It may be true as pointed out by Okeke (1984), that the NUT is trying a great deal in providing

welfare schemes for its members but one may not be surprised to find out that there are still few Nigerian teachers who have not registered as full members of the union. The NUT is striving hard to uphold the ethics of the teaching profession but the differences in standards of admission of new members into the profession and even the admission of non professional graduates affects the standard of ethics of the teaching profession in Nigeria.

According to Aderounmu and Ehiamentalor (1981), for NUT to be in a position to assert itself as a professional organization and be able to professionally play its role, it must establish that its members according to the Nigerian school master must be:

- i. knowledgeable
- ii. can apply their knowledge meaningfully, usefully and relatively,
- iii. are prepared to serve others.

Unfortunately most teachers do not possess the necessary qualifications to be in the classroom. There are some teachers who get paid for doing no work at all, teachers who spend most of the time under the shade of trees while the children play away the whole time on the fields. NUT has a duty to make such teachers alive to their responsibilities.

It would appear that the NUT activities are centred around crisis moments and moments to agitate for increase in wages. Why are the members mostly of primary school teachers? There are few graduates and school principals. This therefore has given rise to the formation of other associations within the teaching profession; such as the Union of Graduate Teachers, Association of NCE Teachers,, the all Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools, the Subject Teachers Association, such as, Science Teachers Association of Nigerian (STAN), Mathematics, English and Geography Teachers Association. For teaching to come into full professionalism in this country, NUT will improve better to be truly professional by working hard to improve the working condition of teachers so that they can in turn improve the children.

Members in a profession enjoy a wide range of autonomy without external influence. Teachers are subject to the education laws and regulations made under it and also to the ethics of the teaching profession Taiwo (1985). When, therefore, we talk of the freedom and autonomy of the individual teacher, he should assert the professional standards as a basis for taking decisions or actions concerning individual issues which bear on the subject area for which he is accredited as competent. He may do so alone, just in the same way a private medical doctor or barrister or a priest handles his decisions and cases. Okeke (1985), points out that if a Nigerian teacher works with others in a structured or hierarchical set up like the school he cannot claim absolute autonomy and freedom on professional ground.

Policy guidelines are laid down by the whole institution within which the teacher must operate. He works within the broad-guidelines prescribed by the institution. His autonomy only lies in the degree of discretion which he demonstrates in methodology and the extent to which he may carry the students along. In this respect, the teacher, in Nigerian schools is pushed to a certain degree of conformity by the results of external examinations where his students must attain certain expected level of performance.

Okeke (1985), agreed that a teacher can enjoy a fairly high degree of autonomy in the classroom. His classroom relationship with his pupils is virtually a closed-door affair to outsiders. On the other hand, the teacher has a relatively limited influence on school goals or administration and little opportunity to control the broader context within which he performs his professional activities. Teachers as civil servants, adhere, to the dictates and control by government department set up to monitor evaluate and impose quality assurance measures.

It therefore, follows that full professionalization of teaching profession in Nigeria will help a lot to add more weight to the teaching, since the evaluation of teachers depends on the performance of the students. When students perform well, it all means that teacher education is improving.

## **Conclusion**

It is a known fact that teacher education is the cornerstone for national development. The present overwhelming outcry of employers, administrators, parents and the general public concerning, uncooked products of the school system will cease if teaching is fully professionalized in this nation. Without good teachers, there can be no good engineers, doctors, lawyers and entrepreneurs that will, move this nation forward. Good teachers possess a sense of professionalism and dignity. This is because they feel they are professionals, and as such, take pride in their work. There is therefore the need for adequate attention to be

given to teacher education in this nation through full professionalization.

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