

THE VITALITY OF THE TEACHER AND TEACHER EDUCATION IN NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

It is actual that no nation can rise above the level of its education, that no educational system can rise above its teachers and that these teachers hold the key to the door of sound education and that sound education is the most critical instrument for change in any society. This fact or observation appears even more obvious in the area of teacher education, given the importance of these concepts in the overall development of a nation. This paper, therefore seeks to examine the vitality of the teacher and teacher education within the context of nation building.

Introduction

A sound educational system is accepted the world over as the bedrock of human development and progress. This statement taken together with 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 serve to prove the key role teachers and teacher education programme play in any progressive society.

Lassa (1996) endorses the above when he opined that, "it is a settled fact that education is the key to nation building or national development". He further argued that it is equally a truism that teachers hold the key to sound education. *Ipsa facto* only teachers can turn that key for national development.

Based on the above, we could assert that the teacher is the pivot on which every educational development hang. So any attempt to improve the quality of education in any country must involve a well articulated teacher education programme that will prepare them for the leadership role they are expected to play.

Ukeje (1991) endorsed all the above views opined in the following statements. According to him:

IF the child is the centre of the educational system, the teacher is the pivot of the educational process. This is because in any educative process, there always stands (he teacher, in front or at the back, at the centre or at the side, what he knows and does can make a great difference and what he does not know, cannot do or fails to do can be an irreparable loss to the child. For it is the teacher in the final analysis who translates policies into practice and programmes into action. Infact a teacher affects eternity.

From the above, it is only pertinent to extol education as a veritable instrument on the way of nation building and no nation can develop with a high rate of illiteracy. However, the success or failure of any educational system depends on the quality of its teaching force. This view was well supported in National Policy on Education (NPB. 1981) as the document viewed education as "the greatest instrument that the nation can make for quick development of its economic, political, social and human resources". Therefore, it continued, that for a nation to be developed and be self reliant a greater percentage must have to be educated, because education equips the cili/enry with the required knowledge, skills and attitudes leading to personal development and the society.

The task before this paper, therefore is to seek an examination of the teacher and teacher education within the context of nation building. In doing this, quality in teacher education was also discussed. And few suggestions for teacher improvement were also highlighted.

Teacher Education And Nation Building

In the words of Rohr (1979), man is the product of his education. Thus, the type of citizens desired by a nation at a given point in time can be attained through a systematic and orderly process of education. In a similar manner, the type of society or nation that would evolve at any period is dependent on the prevailing educational system that has been put in place and the educational goals that guide its operation (Lawal, M.B; Aniah, K.J; Uchc. S.C; and Animashaun, I.A.. 1995: 4).

From the above, we can add in articulating a recipe for nation building but, that before any nation or society embarks on nation —building, it must first of nil decide on what kind of society it wants. Nigeria for example, spelt these out in her National Policy on education (NIF, 1981). in it, it is believed that Nigerians on doing other things want:

- a free and democratic society
- a united strong and self- reliant nation
- a just and egalitarian society
- a great and dynamic economy
- land of bright and full of opportunities for all citizens.

Given this type of society as it depicts Nigeria, nation building can be defined to mean (the conscious and unconscious efforts by the people and government to continuously contribute to the realization of the kind of society desired. Therefore, the individual and collective contribution by way of skills, attitudes, sound moral, economic resource, scientific and technological knowledge towards translating the national objectives into reality, constitute nation building.

Also in line with this definition is Lawal (1992) as he perceived educational endeavour a linkage and catalyst to nation building, when he argued "that education is meant to enable the individual discover his potentialities and make him contribute to the development process. Education is thus regarded as a *sin - qua - non* for the development of other resources and potentials of a country, he asserted.

Fafunwa (1974) also while asserting the relevance of education to nation building opined that "apart from (the fact that education is the most important ingredient through which a nation can attain development, that it affects the whole nation's engagement towards self -- sustained development. He further said that human achievement is reflected in the level of educational attainment and the foundation of this endeavour is the teacher education programme. This view is rightly summarised as saying "Education unlocks the door to modernization but is often not realized or recognized that it is the teacher via a good teacher education who holds the key to the door". Further extension of this assertion is to say that, the quality of development of any nation is largely determined by the quality of her teacher and teacher education programme. And if the teacher education programmes are qualitative, then the product of the schools are very likely to reflect the caliber of persons needed to service the various sectors of (the nation's life, desires and aspirations.

Ajayi (1993) in Falayajo (1996) in an article "The Teacher As The Measure" discussed the vitality of teacher and teacher education programmes in these remarks. According to him 'development is essentially concerned with the development of materials and human resources". He then went on (to argue that teachers constituted a major factor in the development of human resources and since it is simply obvious that it is human beings who develop material resources and not the other way round the centrality of teachers and teacher education to development and nation building is established. In addition, he defined teacher by what he does and by his or her performance characteristics, not by the level which he operates.

From the above remarks, it seems quite obvious that what teachers do is closely linked with the development of a nation. In other words, the linkage is simply the obvious. The teacher from these assertions is a key agent in societal transformation, it is only proper to say that the attainment of any national objectives of building a strong, egalitarian and self- reliant nation rest to a large extent on the activities of teachers via a quality teacher education which is consequently interconnected with the attainment of national objectives. Indeed, no national development can rise above the quality of its teachers; for teachers directly or indirectly produce the manpower needs of the nation. No wonder the saying "that no educational system can rise above its teachers" and this is rooted in (the fact that education is the key to national development.

Need For Quality In Teacher Education

We hold (that in a developing nation like Nigeria, teaching is the most vital and strategic profession for national development. This is so because without good teachers there can be no good engineers, no good medical doctors, no good lawyers indeed without good teachers and good

educational systems, we invariably have unimaginative and unpatriotic engineers with roads that wash away after the first rains, doctors that kill more than can cure, incongruous laws and purchased justice. Of course, the cumulative effect would be non development rather than development and at times national retrogression instead of progression and development.

Indeed the strategic importance of the teacher and teacher education can hardly be over emphasized. When compared with the other professions, the mistakes of the teacher and therefore, defective teacher education programmes are more devastating not only to the individual but also to the entire nation than the mistakes of a member of any other profession.

Ukeje (1991) endorsed the above assertions when he said that "if a doctor makes a mistake a patient many die, of engineer makes a mistake a bridge may collapse and when a lawyer makes a mistake his client may lose his liberty but if a teacher makes a mistake it will affect generations yet unborn".

This paper in this subsection discusses the need for quality in teacher education as a plausible panacea to nation building. In like manner, we believe that the quality of development of any nation is largely determined by the quality of her teacher education programme. If the teacher education programme is qualitative then the products of the schools are very likely to reflect the calibre of persons needed to service the various sectors of the nation's life and aspirations".

Essien (1975:3) is in support of the above, when he opined that "for a meaningful change to take place education has to instil, certain qualities in people such as positive attitudes to work, the desire to acquire skill and appreciate the value of competence and excellence"¹.

Madueke (1997) in his contribution on the issue of "quality in teacher education a viable route to nation building" said "since national development has a direct link with education and the teacher translates educational policies into practice, that it follows, that the education of the teacher should be the priority of any country wishing to develop in all branches of human endeavour. And advised that if we are serious about the reconstruction of the Nigerian society, then we must first accept our present ills, then design and articulate the future we want and adequately finance an appropriate educational system with particular reference to a quality teacher educational programme.

In the view of Ukeje (1991:4) he extolled quality teacher education for nation building when he said that "this is important because unless an educational system enables those who pass through it to identify purposefully with the goals of their society the system fails as an instrument for meaningful change".

From the above we can deduce the emphasis on quality and competence. Competence is a very important quality in any job. An incompetent driver for example puts the lives of his passengers of great risk. The same could be said of an incompetent teacher. This also brings to mind the implications of poor quality teacher education which are better imagined than experienced. If we accept that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers and we know education is the catalyst for all spheres of human development, then it follows that a country that operate poor quality teacher education will purposefully remain undeveloped and thus suffer the consequences of underdevelopment.

Suggestions For Teacher Education Improvement

In view of all that is discussed above on the vitality of the teacher and teacher education to nation building. This paper proffered some suggestions for its improvement and which will invariably enhance or contribute to the needed nation building.

First is the teacher education. It is settled that a vital factor in teacher education for national development is the quality of the teacher educator. Naturally one cannot give what one does not have. Hence, if we want quality in teacher education apart from adequate facilities high calibre trainable human material, we must first and foremost provide high quality teacher educators.

Secondly, is the force that determines the will to do a thing called motivation. Because professionals tend to keep to their job when they are highly motivated and there is job satisfaction.

Thirdly, this has to do with remuneration which should be made attractive enough for those in the profession. Fafunwa (1969:109) opined that unless the remuneration is attractive, students of good quality will hardly be attracted for training.

Fourthly, is the professional awareness and in Formation through researches could be made available by mounting conferences, workshops, seminars should be regular routine for teacher improvement and updating standards and teaching methods.

Fifthly, this suggestion hinges on the Government and other stakeholders in the educational sector operation. Because, if we are serious about the reconstruction of the Nigerian society then we must first accept present ills, then design and articulate the future we want and eventually design and adequately balance an appropriate educational system with particular reference to teacher education. The National Policy on Education (NPH. 1981) contains an appropriate design. What remain is for it to be accorded a national priority position as a veritable agency for national development if not survival. In this respect, the government should be able to fund teacher education properly and regularly.

Conclusion

We have emphasized the pivotal, catalytic nature and power of education in social

reconstruction and attainment of meaningful change towards nation building. This paper also discussed teachers and teacher education vitality as the determinant of role of education in social change. The need for quality teacher education as necessary plausible panacea for nation building. Finally, some suggestions on teacher education improvement were proffered.

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