

TEACHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

The major focus of this paper is an examination of how teacher education can respond to the changing vistas of disciplinary knowledge and skills as well as the school climate of the 21st century. It also describes the basic template from which a teacher is cast. This is followed by a review of the trends in teacher education in Nigeria. Some of the challenges of teacher education are inadequate infrastructure, inadequate funding by the government, low quality of students admitted and low quality of some teaching staff. All these contribute to the fallen standard of teacher education in Nigeria. Next is a forecast for the 21st century. Finally, it provides alternatives for teacher education with potential to respond favourably to changes in the 21st century.

Introduction

Education is given to various people according to the needs of the people. It is for the people that the transfer of knowledge through teaching and learning is geared to enable them develop, invest in themselves, equip themselves for the labour market, make use of opportunities for equity and bring about national development through productivity. Education aids the development of men for a lifetime and the allocation of roles in the society through recruitment and socializing the people into occupations; professions or political roles (Okeke, 2004). Educational roles vary from one country to another depending on the philosophy and policies set up for the citizenry, the national ideals as the affect' culture, attitudes, values and behavioural patterns. Teacher education is one of such occupation resulting from this development process.

Onwumere (2006) describes education as the springboard for social-political, economic and cultural development that enhances the production of skilled manpower for national development. However, this cannot be achieved without well trained, knowledgeable and highly motivated teacher. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers as recognized by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), the teacher becomes the hub on which the education system rotates. Therefore, teachers are the key elements in achieving sustainable national development. This implies that teacher education is a fundamental form of education that should be functional and solid in all ramifications so as to meet the present challenges of the 21st century.

There is high increase in the demand for education at all levels in Nigeria due to the increased awareness of its importance, increase population and the need for critical skills for survival in the society. Therefore, there is urgent need for more qualified teachers to bridge the gap between the high growing student population and the number of qualified teachers in our system. As we know, the quality of teachers determines the standard of education in any country. On the other hand, the standard of education determines the level of sustainable development, all other things being equal. The standard of education in Nigeria has fallen drastically. The standard has fallen to the extent that many Degree and NCE holders cannot express themselves freely in English, how much more imparting knowledge to others. Most colleges of education in Nigeria are mass-producing NCE holders, majority of whom may be a threat to the development of education and sustainable development.

Today, the World is a global village via information technology, yet many of our colleges have no access to Internet facilities due financial problems. There are colleges where students completed a course on computer education without seeing computer physically. These problems are compounded by high level of corruption that has penetrated into teacher education institutions.

Therefore, this paper sees the need to prepare teachers to face 21st century challenges in Nigerian classrooms.

The Meaning of Teacher Education

The term "teacher" in this paper is used to mean those who work in schools providing

education for le'arners. Thus, "teacher education" refers to the structures, institutions, and processes by which men and women are prepared for work in schools for the purpose of imparting knowledge, skills and favourable attitudes (Okebukola, 1996). The teacher, unsung, and low rated, has remained the hub around which the wheel of education revolves. The depth of knowledge of the educated populace is largely the depth of knowledge of the teachers (Taiwo, 1994 & Lassa, 1996). Teacher education is the type of training or education given to would-be teachers to enable them impart knowledge effectively in a typical classroom situation (Onwumere, 2006). According to Ezeali (2004), teacher education is a form of education, which especially geared or tailored to Yyards the production of people who will teach essentially in the primary and secondary schools. The primary function of teacher is to help students learn by imparting knowledge and by setting up a situation in which student can and will lean effectively. But teachers fill a complex set of roles, which vary from one society to another and from one educational, level to another. Some of these roles include: mediator of learning; disciplinarian substitute; judge of achievement; curriculum developer; researcher; and public servant.

The changing nature of knowledge and skills in a discipline demands that the education of the teacher should respond to such changes. The rate of change will be quickening in .this century. Preparing now to respond to such high rate change is obviously, a desirable venture.

The Development of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The history of teacher; education can be traced back to the time of Christian Missionaries, the period 1890-1952. Initially, teacher education was informal; children were recruited and trained specially to propagate the gospel.

The programme followed the following pattern

1. the schools were built in the church premises, and
2. the students stayed with the missionaries as part of the family.

One of the Lugard's greatest concerns when he took over Nigeria education so that Nigerians can be employed to fill up vacant posts in government. The two most important polices of his administration include:

- (a) to train teaches, and
- (b) to improve their conditions of service.

The territory known, as Nigeria witnessed the humbly beginning of Western education form the south in 1842. The mission established the first primary school in the country. From that period *on*, formal education grow progressively until the late 1950s when the country could beast of the following institutions:

Primary School

- * Secondary School.
Provide Training.
Teacher Training Colleges
Technical Institutions,
Nigerian College of Arts and Science Technology.
- * University College, Ibadan.

As the member of schools increased, more attention was paid on establishment of more teacher training colleges to give the required professional training. The following teacher institutions were to give professional training;

- i. Grade II Teacher Colleges;
- ii. Advanced Teachers Colleges;
- iii. Institute of Education;
- iv. National Teachers' Institute and Teacher Centres.

In a study conducted to find out the "Attitudes of Selected Nigerian Colleges of Education Students Towards Teacher Education" in Cross River State, Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) notes the current teacher training institutions in Nigeria, to include:

- a) Colleges of Education;
- b) Faculties of Education;
- c) Institutes of Education;
- d) National Teacher's Institute;
- e) Schools of Education in the Polytechnics;
- f) National Institute for Nigerian Language (NINLAN); and
- g) National Mathematical Centre (NMC)

All the above mentioned educational institutions are regarded as tertiary education institutions whose goals according to FRN (2004), shall be to:

- (a) contribute to national development through high level relevant manpower training;
- (b) develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and society;
- (c) develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- (d) acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- (e) promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- (f) forge and cement national unity; and
- (g) promote national and international understanding and interaction.

These institutions shall pursue these goals by means of: (a) teaching;

(b) research and development;

(c) generation and dissemination of knowledge, among others.

The Objectives of Teacher Education

The objectives of teacher education as stated, by the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) include:

- (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 the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- (d) provide teachers 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 document also provides strategies for the achieve of the objectives through:

- (a) the professional training of all teachers in educational institutions,
- (b) the structure of teacher education programme to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties.

Basic Template for Teacher Preparation

The mould from which teachers are cast has three knowledge base components. These are the content knowledge the pedagogic knowledge and the pedagogic content knowledge. **Content knowledge** is defined as the knowledge of the subject matter or the content of the teaching Subject. It is for example, the teacher's knowledge of social studies, its structure, concepts and epistemology. Simply put, it is how much of Social Studies the Social Studies teacher knows. *Pedagogic knowledge* is the knowledge of the art of teaching basic principles of teaching e.g. how to use the chalkboard, ask questions, write lesson notes, and evaluate teaching. *Pedagogic content knowledge* is the knowledge of how to teach content, usually taught during subject methodology classes like social studies methods or

geography methods.

Training activities geared specifically to preparing teachers need to contemplate not only instruction on the curriculum and specific teaching procedures, but more importantly the development of the ability to reason, 'pedagogically' on the part of student teachers in order to convert substantive knowledge into teachable knowledge and experiment with how this can be done.

Educational Challenges of the 21st Century

The 21st century is markedly different from the twentieth, a change of magnitude that could be twice that of the contrast between the 19th and the 20th. Population growth pattern and advances in technology are the key factors in the anticipated rapid transformation. The rapidity of change makes the description of the scenario for the whole of the 21st century rather difficult-like shooting at a moving target. The safer pathways to tread are to look at quarterly milestones/The safest projection to make, therefore, is for the first quarter of the 21st century, anchoring in 2025.

The trend of registering fetuses for admission into choice Pre-primary/Nursery schools could result in having much younger children in our classrooms of the early 21st century (Okebukola, 1996), The challenge for the teacher is in being able to cope with level of development of younger children.

One of the greatest challenges that the teacher will have to face is a spin-off of "Education for All". In this connection, the teacher will have to contend with teaching underserved groups.

Another challenge is that of students with poor attitude to work. The attitude of students to work over the last ten years has been worsening. This trend is likely to continue far into the 21st century. The teacher is then faced with the challenge of coping with truants, disruptive students, and non-challenge to school work.

The phenomenon of large classes is also predicted of large classes is also predicted to be a feature of the 21st century classroom. The class sizes will be large relative to the present conditions on account for the anticipated increase in population and as a consequence of the "Education for All" movement. The problems associated with large, classes such as inability to successfully meet the needs of individual students and pedagogical frustration are some of the challenges that the teacher of the 21st century should prepare to face.

As a consequence of a depressed economy in the first quarter of the 21st century, school facilities will be poorer. The decay now experienced in our schools in infrastructure and equipment will still be a feature of the period 2000 to 2025. The teacher will face a handicap of teaching materials and the predominant mode of instruction will be the lecture. New technologies that are computer driven and multimedia will gradually inch their way into some of the classrooms. This is another challenge that the teacher will have to face. Training in the use of these technologies is therefore essential.

The curricula of the millennium will be laden with never concepts in response to changes in the various disciplines. The teacher will have to be prepared to cope with the demands of such never concepts. It is envisaged also that learners will be "smarter" in terms of their intellect The teacher of the future would then need to be prepared for bright students. The number of such students could be small but they would constitute a group to be reckoned within our classrooms.

Profile of the successful teacher of the 21st century. As stated earlier, one of the envisioned characteristics of the classroom of the early 21st century are young, relatively immature learners with very poor attitude to work. The successful teacher would therefore, need to be tolerant of poorly-motivated students and be able to match instructional strategy with the level of cognitive development of the learners.

The teacher should also be knowledgeable in emerging concepts in this subject area. More importantly the teacher should be able to seek out new knowledge form the literature and other sources and exhibit up-to-datedness in the concepts, facts and ideas in his/her area of specialization. Skills of metacognition or learning how to learn would need to be displayed by the teacher.

On the basis that facilities will be severely limiting, the successful teacher will need to be resourceful much beyond the scope expected of the present day teacher. The teacher should be able to adjust to rapidly changing conditions and should display the ability of using scant resources to full

effect.

The teaching profession has been a leap-frogging platform for many. The idea of teaching as a sleeping stone explains, at least in part, the low level of commitment of many teachers to the profession. To be successful in the 21st century, teachers will need to be driven primarily by intrinsic motivation.

Preparing Teachers to Face 21st Century Challenges in Nigerian Classrooms

It is customary to partition teacher education into pre-service and in-service although these labels are "being replaced with initial and continuing teacher education (Hallak, 1990). Pre-service teacher training is traditionally designed for the untrained and unqualified teacher. It includes all the stages of education and training that precede the teacher's entry to paid employment in a school. The professional preparation, which is varied in duration depending on the level to which training is targeted e.g. primary or secondary, equips the trainee with knowledge in the content area and specialized teaching skills.

In-service training on the other hand is designed to add on to the knowledge and skills already possessed by a serving teacher. It is the training that the teacher receives after the beginning of his career. The training fills gaps and equips the teacher with skills necessary for improved performance on present job or for higher teaching and/or administrative position in the profession. These are linked to the fact that teachers need opportunities to step back and look at problems associated with their practice, update their content knowledge and learn about new teaching resources or teaching approaches. Workshops enable teachers to examine reflectively their teaching practice, develop alternative strategies, experiment with them and evaluate their results. Seminars, workshops, part-time/sandwich training programmes especially those given during the vacation periods are forms of training usually given in the in-service mode.

The preparation of teachers to face challenges in the 21st century would need to be undertaken at the pre-service and in-service levels. For those who miss the pre-service net, the in-service provides a correction centre,

It is generally believed that teachers teach as they were taught. Therefore, the commitment of teacher educators to their onerous task of molding future professional teachers is one way of ensuring a high standard of teacher education. Avalos (1991), while admitting that teachers who are motivated to teach generally teach well, quotes a British educationist (Katherine Evans), who had argued that "the ability to teach is not the same as actually bothering to do so". Abdulkadir (1991) advocates two systems of monitoring the quantity and quality of teaching by lecturers in high institutions, namely: assessment by students and assessment by peers. Such assessments would contribute to quality control and the maintenance of standards.

It is obvious that government alone cannot finance education at all levels in Nigeria. Private organizations, non-governmental organizations and alumni associations should be encouraged to contribute to the funding of teacher education. Representative of these groups should be included in the management of the colleges in form of members of governing council of each college. This will encourage them to be committed to it.

It has been variously asserted that teacher education is the foundation of quality in any educational system. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that viable thrusts at raising the standard start with improving the quality and standard of teacher education. Fortunately, a start has already been made by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), through the imposition of Minimum Standards for training NCE teachers on all NCE awarding institutions in the country. The minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) (FKN, 2004).

An obvious implication of this policy provision, which many State Ministries of Education are already aspiring to implement, is that the NCE holders will now take over teaching at the primary schools. It is our conviction that most of the issues raised about falling standard of education in Nigeria would be contained when better qualified teachers, both in subject content and pedagogy, have flooded the primary schools. In order to cope with the anticipated challenges, the NCCE has provided for a programme in Primary Education Studies and all NCE awarding institutions are being encouraged to expand admissions in this area.

With the obvious shortfall in the number of experienced school inspectors consequent upon rapid

increase in the number of schools in Nigeria, it has become increasingly difficult to get reliable appraisal of what happens in the schools. This problem pervades the three tiers of education in Nigeria. However, the point must be made for the necessity to provide a verily inspectorate outfit for our schools system to police the maintenance of the minimum standards and to act as incidental resources to advise teachers on problematic encouragers with the pupils. The vogue in teacher preparation institutions in many developing countries is to have what is known as "21st century classrooms". These are centers where the anticipated classroom climate of the 21st century is stimulated. Teacher trainees are taken through this climate and are taught techniques of coping in the areas of teaching, research, administration and evaluation.

This trend should be adopted in the Nigerian setting. In this regard, each College of Education and Faculty of Education should set up one 21st Century Classroom. The typical classroom displays multimedia equipment. For us, it should also have such characteristics as overcoming, poorly motivated students and facilities handicap. The 21st century, classroom will serve as a good laboratory; for the pre-service training of teachers for the futures. All colleges of Education and Faculty of Education would have one of these laboratories in place. Each trainee would put in a minim often hours of practicum in partial fulfillment of the requirement for graduation.

Rewards even as tokens have general motivating influence on normal human beings to put up their best. Nigeria has already institutionalized the culture of National Awards. It is strongly suggested that "Teachers of the Year" should be rewarded as an incentive for other teachers to improve their productivity. Similarly, the best-managed schools could be identified and the Heads of such schools duly rewarded

Conclusion

Predicting the future in the provision of educational experiences is fraught with any uncertainties. In this paper, a member of these uncertainties has been factored into the exercise of examining future trends in teacher education in Nigeria. A review of .the anticipated challenges to education in the 21 at century was undertaken. A profile of the teacher that could successfully cope with such challenges was described. Pre-service and in-service programmes for training such teachers were proposed. Also proposed is the establishment of 21st century classrooms.

Education is mainly concerned with Human Resource Development (HRD). Broadly defined, HRD relates to the education, training and utilization of human potentials for social and economic progress. There are five "energizers" of HRD: education, health and nutrition, the environment, employment, political and economic freedom. These energizers are interlinked and interdependent, but education is the basis for all the others, an essential factor in the improvement of health and nutrition, for maintaining a high-quality environment, for expanding and improving labour pools, and for sustaining political and economic responsibility (Hallak, 1990).

Within this important venture called education, the key actor is the teacher, planning from the education of this actor for an unpredictable future situated in the 21st century is indeed a worthwhile venture. Raising the motivation, commitment, and public responsibility of this important actor is a recipe of success and sustainable development in the 21st century.

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