

# TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ISSUE OF PROFESSIONALIZATION

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## Abstract

*Every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens, because of the realization that education is necessary for engineering and consolidating any nation's developmental process. However, achieving quality education would be a mirage if teacher education is not in good shape. This paper examines the purpose of teacher education, challenges facing teacher education and the way forward. The paper also critically analyzed teaching as a profession in Nigeria and it was discovered that several attempts had been made by the government and other stakeholders in the education sector, to professionalize teaching. However, their efforts were being truncated by the problems of influx of different kinds of unqualified people in the profession, among others. It was therefore recommended that a professional body or association should be composed to regulate entrance into this teaching occupation; minimum qualifications into teaching should be a degree certificate; society should be made to see teaching as a noble profession; in-service training and ICT training should be encouraged for teachers; and teachers and members of the*

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*teachers' union at all levels should stop discriminating against themselves.*

Education can be regarded as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potentials and all kinds of rights and powers. The increasing awareness of the importance of education to the upliftment of the individual and the societal standards has awakened in people and nations a conscious effort at devoting their meager resources to acquiring qualitative education. Balogun (2010) opined that education is the light without which, the whole world would be in darkness. It is the basis for scientific and technological breakthrough and the basis of modernity, which have made all nations of the world accord immense priority to it, even though the levels of priority range from one country to another.

The success of an educational enterprise particularly in terms of quality, depends on a very large extent on the supply of quality of teachers, in the right mix to man the various levels of the educational system of the country. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) asserted that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. However, what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available in the system. According to Ibukun (2004), the quality of human resources in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of the effectiveness of educational programmes.

The saying that no nation ever rises above the quality of the teacher illustrate the pivotal position which teachers occupy in the society. Thus, schools should always provide a solid training in basic skills with educational arrangements that are friendly, democratic and communal. This requires a supportive teacher education programme that can render such specialized training to the prospective teachers.

The fact that no educational system can rise above its teachers and nation can experience remarkable development without quality teachers has been well documented. It is therefore not an overstatement that the professionalization of teaching and making the teacher the centre of educational reform in Nigeria, will enhance teachers' productivity, reduce the systemic problems in the educational sector, ensure effective service delivery, engage other sectors of society as well as place education as instrument par excellence for national development. This paper therefore examines professionalization of the teaching profession in Nigeria, the challenges of teacher education and the ways of ascertaining the good prospects of teacher education in Nigeria.

### **Conceptualizing Teacher Education**

Adewuji and Ogunwuyi (2002) opined that teacher education is the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period for the

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preparation of individuals who should intend to develop and nurture the young ones as responsible and productive citizens. Teaching is an all-purposeful profession which stimulates the development of mental, physical and emotional power of students. The educated citizens would be sensitive and equipped with peaceful coexistence, environmental management and democratic process.

The heartbeat of manpower development training for prudent use and sustenance of resources in nation-building is teacher education. Teacher education, being inextricably linked with general education and social goals, is constantly caught in a series of dilemmas derivable from education expansion and social change. The prevailing crisis in Nigeria education and society as typified by unemployment, poverty, corruption, insecurity and indiscipline could be ascribed to the neglect of teacher education and pitiable plight of the teachers. All these conflict relationship precipitated poverty-induced hardships across all segments of the Nigerian communities. What structurally becomes important in achieving the nation's quest for self-reliant society is to put in place a comprehensive teacher education programme (Adewuji, 2012).

Ogunwuji (2010) contended that education should be globally adopted as an agent of change and stability to promote probity, equity and equality of opportunities and a launching pad for sustainable development. Herein, teacher education embraces and radiates the energizing forces of change backed up purposefully by democratic leadership and national economic policies. This provides the basis for sustainable development and an environment which largely facilitate harmonious creation of wealth and wellbeing of humanity.

According to Oyekan (2006), the purpose of teacher education is to produce well-qualified professional teachers that adjust to the changing needs of the students and developmental programmes of the modern society. In specific term, the goals of teacher education are stipulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) in the National Policy on Education to:

- Produce highly motivational, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers, for all levels of our educational system.
- Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in Nigeria
- Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment of national goals.
- Provide teachers with the intellectual professional background adequate for assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of the country but in the wide world.
- Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

### **Professionalizing Teaching**

A profession is an occupation or vocation that requires special skills, knowledge of some departments of learning and qualification. It is that job that utilizes functional education and mental abilities rather than manual or physical labour. According to Dada and Fadokun (2010), a profession entails an occupation that is dependent upon specialized intellectual study and training for the provision of skilled service to other members of the society, government and nongovernmental agencies for a definite fee or salary.

Orubite (2010) posited that a profession is a paid job that requires prolonged training and formal educational qualifications. He views it as an occupation in which member acquires a body of systematic knowledge on which their work with people is based, develop an in-group feeling of belonging and responsibility, assume an attitude of moral concern toward clients and join together association to advance the vocation and control member conduct through established ethics.

The status of teaching as a profession in Nigeria has been a contentious issue over the years. Ajayi (2007) observed that teaching need more accepted characteristics of a profession but not fully because of lack of teachers commitment to the profession, the porosity of entrance into teaching, the low social status of teaching and poor remuneration of teachers. Orubite (2010) opined that the contention among teachers in the different levels (primary, secondary and tertiary institutions) in who is more superior impede the professionalization of teaching, making teaching lack the basic prerequisite of being a full profession.

Emeh & Oguboh (2010) posited that autonomy and self-government are principally missing in teaching. Although the decree setting up Teachers Registration Council was promulgated in 1993, it is yet to be fully operational. Subsequently, autonomy in teaching is significantly absent and the vocation is yet to receive professional status in Nigeria (Dada and Fadokun, 2010).

### **The Need for professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria**

The understanding that Nigeria is an embodiment of social institutions that are manned by trained personnel produced by teachers and these institutions function collectively for national development propelled the quest for the professionalization of teaching. It is therefore imperative that entrance into teaching be controlled and regulated by a professional body (Teachers Registration Council) and this can only be achieved through professionalization of teaching.

The unethical behaviour among teachers, poor academic performance of students, academic dishonesty among teachers at all levels, ineffectiveness of regulatory body in the teaching occupation and the general institutional weakness in Nigeria are all pointers that teaching should be professionalized. The low social status ascribed to teaching the remuneration and other motivational incentives in the teaching jobs further amplified why the occupation should be professionalized. Orubite (2010) argued that for

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occupation to be professionalized, society must hold such a vocation in high esteem and practitioners in such occupation must be remunerated and motivated. Yusuf (2010) posited that once a staff is properly motivated and held in high esteem by management, efficiency and effectiveness in the workplace would be guaranteed and this would be in turn accelerate overall growth and development within the organization and the nation at large. This implies that professional teachers are not only to solve problems in the classroom but also to initiate proposals for solving national problems.

Abimbola (2005) opined that teachers' professional development consists of activities a teacher can engage to keep abreast of new developments, evaluate and improve his classroom performance. Such activities according to him include participating in in-service courses and workshops, participating in and attending professional meetings and reading professional journals. The emphasis in the observation raised the institutional and professional needs of the individual teacher. This means that a career-long professional development programme for teachers which can be realized through a combination of various approaches involving initial training, regulation and in-service training programme be designed to cater for the needs of prospective and serving teachers.

Efforts to professionalize teaching according to Firestone and Boder (1992) attempts to change the settings in which teacher work. It gives the teachers more influence over curriculum teaching-learning process, therefore setting the stage for improvement in teaching. Professionalizing teaching, according to them, has been found to increase teachers' commitment with attention to their pedagogical content knowledge, thus making educational reforms to be successful. Professionalizing teaching builds teachers' commitment and improves curriculum and instruction. Teachers become more committed to the goals and value of an organization (or a way of teaching), voluntarily comply with orders and expectations and may want to stay permanently on the profession.

### **Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The educational system can be viewed as a system comprising various sub-systems (the primary levels, the secondary level and the tertiary level). There is a functional relationship among the subsystems, such that a defect in one subsystem would automatically affect the other sub-systems.

Teachers form the hub of the education process. It is in this context that teacher education becomes a matter of great concern. The challenge facing the teacher education system in Nigeria appears herculean, prominence among these are:

- **Lack of commitment:** Most teachers nowadays are not committed to the teaching job. Ajayi and Shofyeke (2003) posited that a number of interrelated factors like poor income, delay in payment of salary, lack of job satisfaction etc contribute to the seemingly teaching attitude and attitude of teachers to their professional calling. The

lack of commitment often manifest in the areas of lack of enthusiasm to work; lack of concern for curricular and extra-curricular activities; classless handling of statutory records among others.

- **Teachers and Professional Ethics:** Teaching as a profession has the ethics to guide members in the discharge of their duties. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) in the Teachers' manual stipulated as one of the ethics of the teaching profession, the teachers should not condone or connive at examination malpractices. However, Ajayi and shofoyeke (2003) reported that teachers often succumb to the pressure of the lazy students to engage in examination malpractices both internal and external examinations. This singular act of the teachers appears to drag the name of the teachers to the mud.

- **Inadequate funding:** Inadequate funding of the education sector has been a major challenge facing the sector. It is not an understatement to note that the Nigerian government, over the years has not been meeting the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. According to Akinditure (2001), the poor funding of the teacher education since the 1980s has become a source of worry to educationists as it affects the merits and standard of the certificates awarded to education students.

- **Problem of Attrition:** There is the problem of attrition in the teaching force and dwindling enrolment of teacher. The teachers conditions of services are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best of trains in the profession (Durosaro, 2006). Besides, the continued uncomplimentary public perceived image of teachers may not likely attract the right caliber of people to be retained in the teaching profession. Today, there are holders of professional qualifications in education serving in the banks, ministries, customers, immigrations and so on.

- **Lack of Motivation:** A very important challenge facing the government in the present dispensation in the area of teacher education is how to motivate teachers in order to encourage new entrants to the profession and retain the old ones. Durosaro (2006) advised that motivation should include better pay, improved condition of service for serving teachers as well as bursary and scholarship award to education students at all levels. This suggests that when all these are not there teachers become less motivated to do the job.

- **Poor Society Perception of Teacher Education:** Another formidable problem of teacher education in Nigeria today is the lack of interest on the part of the secondary school leaves in the teaching profession, because of the power image associated with the status of teachers in the society. Ibukun (2004) lamented that many brilliant individual are not willing to take up teaching as a profession. It appears that the present system in Nigeria promotes the reservation of intellectually and financially deficient students for

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the teaching careers. How then the third class brains be expected to effectively teach first class brains.

- **Teachers and Role Conflict:** It has been observed in recent times that some practicing teachers in the education system have divided loyalty to the profession because of their involvement in some other assignments outside the teaching job. It appears that those that engage in this kind of divided loyalty do so in order to make both ends meet. However, this tendency jeopardizes the progress of the profession.

- **Teacher Education and Curriculum Development:** A major challenge to teacher education in the present dispensation is that of globalization. The world is gradually becoming a global village and for teachers to have currency and operates effectively and efficiently in the next future, the teacher need to imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the advanced countries of the world.

### **The way forward**

Despite the enormous challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria, a lot can still be done in order to enjoy the multi-farious benefit abound in teacher education. The following are suggested.

- **True professionalization of the Teaching Profession:** It is necessary to play politics with the professionalization of the teaching profession. By professionalization, the code of ethics will be respected and the profession will not be open to every Tom Dick and Harry. In making a professional teaching qualification mandatory, government should make it compulsory for all in the teaching jobs at all levels, to acquire teaching qualification. Government should give another deadline within a convenient time frame to ensure that by 2020, all teachers would have become professionals, because the 2006 deadline as seen in the Teachers Registration Council Act had fail, 2006, had come and gone and noting much had been done to ensure that all teachers are professionalized. Thanks to some State Government in Nigeria that gave a salary differential in the payment of the teacher salary structure (TSS). While teachers with educational background enjoy 27.5%, those without education certificates enjoy 12.5%.

- **Positive Perception of Teaching:** For teacher education to get its pride of place in this democratic dispensation, there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The profession must be recognized by the government, as well as the public to be able to attract young ones into the profession. Akinditure (2005) lamented that Nigerian schools are staffed with unenthusiastic, ill-motivated, reluctant and “burn-out” teachers. How will teacher be motivated to work when a Local Government Councilor earn better pay than a University Professor? When teachers’ salaries are not paid at the appropriate time. No

wonder, a lot of people use the profession as a stepping stone toward getting a better offer that earns better public recognition.

- **Befitting infrastructure in the schools.**

There is also the need for improvement in the level of the infrastructural facilities in schools: This, however, depends to a large extent, on the level of funding made available to the system. Ibukun ( 2004 ) advocated for modern educational gadgets like computers, modern instructional materials and packages to be consciously introduce into the teacher education programs. It must be noted that no program, no matter how well intended, can succeed if adequate infrastructural facilities are not provided for implementation.

- **Need for curriculum orientation:** For the teacher to keep abreast of the going in the world and in his area of specialization, there is the need for the teacher to be ICT compliant. The teacher education curriculum needs to be reviewed so as to incorporate ICT in all levels of teacher education. Besides, Durosaro (2006) posited that as a result of the growing graduate unemployment in Nigeria, there is the need to include some entrepreneurial skill development courses into teacher education programs The teachers must be trained, not only in the act of self – development through continuous learning, they must also be adequately prepared for self – employment.

- **Improve welfare packages:** Motivation for teacher should be considered as a means of improving output and productivity in the school system. Welfare package does not mean increase in salary alone, It entails regular payment of salary and improved conditions of service.

- **Improvement in the Academic and Professional Training of Teachers:** More time should be provided for practical work before students are certified as teachers. There is the need to review upward the twelve weeks of internship for education students in the University. To provide sound teacher education in future, the present curriculum need to be reviewed so as to provide more time for students in the practical aspect of teaching before certificates are awarded to them as qualified teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The quality of education in Nigeria has been a source of concern to all stakeholders in recent times. It has been observed that there is poor quality of products from all levels of the production system. It is accepted that teachers constitutes the most important input in the system that determines the quality of output, more important than the amount of resources on ground. This is so because teaching is that important activity which makes possible the acquisition of knowledge and skills that bring about the mark of an educated and useful person in the society. Education remains a single major factors

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for national development. The teacher is central in this enterprise and no tool has been able to replace the teacher yet, this is because, no educational system can rise above its teachers. The teachers holds the remedy to the many problems ravaging Nigeria. The teachers efficiency matters in these regards. Professionalizing teaching should therefore assume strategic position towards national development, and in actualizing the quest of making Nigeria one of the top 20 economies in the world by the year 2020.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made:

- A professional body or association should be empowered to regulate entrance into the teaching occupation and control ethical conduct of members. The body should be autonomous and operate as such. The teachers Registration council of Nigeria (TRCN) should be empowered financially and legally to play this role.
- Minimum qualification or entrance into teaching should be a degree certificate. That is an intending teacher must first of all specialize in his / her field before going for a course that would enable him / her impact knowledge in that field of studies.
- Society and teachers should be reoriented to see teaching as prestigious job with high social status. This impels that good condition of service must be put in place for teachers and they should be properly remunerated.
- In - service training, collaboration, workshops and ICT training should be encouraged by the government for teachers. These would enable neophyte teacher to become professionals as well as upgrade the knowledge of existing professional teachers.
- Seminars and conferences should be organized to represent teacher and members of teachers unions at all level to stop discriminating against themselves. It is therefore imperative that teachers at all levels of put on a common front to professionalize teaching in Nigeria.

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