

TRANSFORMATION OF NIGERIA CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION FOR QUALITATIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The paper tried to examine the transformation of Nigeria Certificate in Education in Colleges of Education for qualitative education. With the federal government of Nigeria stipulating that the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) would be the minimum teaching qualification, it become imperative that transformation should be carried on from time to time and also to improve on the quality of education. Transformation is the process of changing from one qualitative state to another. It defines quality, focuses on process, the enhancement and empowerment of the learner, especially when transformation is related to higher education. Major challenges of quality education include: shortage of skilled man power; Weak leadership, management and governance, problems of quality and relevance, poor funding and lack of capacity for diversification and Poor physical facilities and infrastructure. Conclusions were drawn and it was recommended amongst others that more staff should be employed in the Nigerian college of education especially academic staff to be able to meet up with the population explosion being witnessed in our institutions, so that the work load of the staff should be reduced and also that more funds should be made available to the colleges of education in Nigeria alongside with other higher institution of learning. This will make room for proper and adequate infrastructural development.

The general consensus among the educationists and development practitioners is that no nation can develop beyond the level of her education. Education is the bed rock of every societal development and nation building, therefore for qualitative education to be achieved, the training and supply of teachers must be adequate in quantity and quality (Adegbesan, 2010). Ukeje (1995) emphasized that education unlocks the door to modernization, but it is the teacher who holds the key to the door. In corroborating this, Gambo (1999) argued that “the Nigerian teachers must be intellectually, conscientiously, highly motivated and professionally sound individuals that are capable of discharging

Pristine

their professional obligations to the nation. As a result such individual must be up-to-date in knowledge, skills and ideas and very adaptable to changing needs and situation.

Thus, the Nigerian government recognizing the importance of education set out specific philosophy and goals to be achieved through education. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2004) in the National Policy on Education stipulated that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plan because education is the most important instrument of change, any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of the society has to be preceded by an educational revolution.

The FRN (2004) described higher (tertiary) education as the education given after secondary schooling years in colleges of education, polytechnics, monotechnics and universities, including those institutions offering correspondence courses. The Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) is a program intended to qualify teachers' for the much-needed primary and junior secondary schools in the country. The certificate is the basic qualification for teaching, which students can obtain after completing a minimum of three years and a maximum of five years in the College of Education. The country's education for teachers is in a deplorable state, since the curriculum has been viewed as having some lapses. The National Commission for Colleges of Education recently made a bold step by reviewing the minimum standards (curriculum) of Colleges of Education but there are still some areas in the Nigeria certificate in education that calls for transformation.

Transformation is a process of transmutation from one state to another. It can apply to an individual or organization, or the product or service supplied by an organization. It is the process of changing from one qualitative state to another. It defines quality, focuses on process, the enhancement and empowerment of the learner, especially when transformation is related to higher education. The learners are said to be better positioned to provide transformative outcome that is transformative learning and research.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in recognition of the vital roles of teachers stated in its National Policy of Education that teachers' education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all the nation's educational planning efforts (F RN, 2004). Also Jekayinfa (2010) in Onifade and Onifade, (2011) traced the origin of teachers' education to the beginning of western education in Nigeria when the first teachers' college known as 'The Training Institution' was established in Abeokuta in 1859 by Church Missionary Society. The school was later moved to Oyo to become the St Andrew College and later upgraded to be the Oyo State College of Education. Later on,

Evelyn Ngozi Offor

the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established by Act 3 of January 1989 and was amended by Act 12 of 1993 as a completion of tripod of excellence in supervision of higher education in Nigeria (NCCE online 2010). This commission provides accreditation services for Colleges of Education and maintains standards through periodic accreditation visits.

Using education as an instrument, the government hopes to produce manpower that will serve in different capacities and contribute positively to the nation's socio-economic and political development. Specifically, the government intends to gear higher education toward high level, relevant manpower training, self-reliance, national utility, and international understanding (FRN, 2004). Many changes were introduced into the Nigerian higher education system in the last decade of the 20th century. During this period as the then minister for education in Nigeria, Ezekwezili observed that the nation's education sector was suffering from a systematic dysfunction at all levels. As the Federal Minister of Education at that time, Ezekwezili embarked on education reforms through which she proposed to bring sanity into the system.

Furthermore, the federal government of Nigeria also stipulated that the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) would be the minimum teaching qualification and encouraged all teachers to be professionally qualified. It granted license to some colleges of education and polytechnics to award degrees in education and this was a type of reform on higher education in Nigeria. Reform continued to be initiated and implemented as people and government saw the need for it. As Omolewa (2008) in Onifade and Onifade (2011) rightly observed that, people are constantly motivated by a desire for change, an eagerness for transformation and a conscious search for progress and development. Moreover, technological development has drawn nations into a global village and changes in one place quickly affect other places. In line with fulfilling these objectives, the government, private organizations, and individuals have established institutions of higher learning in different parts of the country. These institutions admit, train, and graduate students in different fields. The expectation is that graduates will work in different sectors of the economy and contribute their quotas toward making Nigeria a developed nation. The Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) is a teacher education program, aimed at producing teachers for the much-needed man power needed at of the primary and junior secondary schools in the country. Since the NCE is the basic qualification for teaching in Nigeria, there is need for special attention and for transformation and reforms in its curriculum. The graduates of the program are qualified to teach at the first nine years basic education (six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education). The Decree (1985, No. 16) was enacted on national

Pristine

minimum standards, and this paved the way for the first and subsequent editions of the national minimum standards (curriculum) of Colleges of Education.

Transformative Learning and Quality Education

Education, in the global context, has been identified as a strategic instrument for social and economic transformation. As observed by Obanya (2009) education in any society plays two major roles; conservation and transformation. Conservation is the society's mechanism for building up and preserving its culture while transformation involves getting society to the next level by taking advantages and advances in ideas, knowledge and technology. An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds.

Good practice encourages contact between students and facilitators, develops cooperation among students, uses active learning techniques, gives prompt feedback, emphasizes time on task, communicates high expectations and values diverse ways of learning (Cranton, 2006). He opines that students learning in these situations are likely to have increased contact with facilitators, interact and collaborate with others as they provide service, engage in active learning at their service activity and through reflection activities, devote more time to coursework and participate in diverse ways of learning.

Transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self. It is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises (Cranton, 2006). Mezirow (1997) opines that transformative learning is learning to purposively question one's own assumptions, beliefs, feelings, and perspectives in order to grow or mature personally and intellectually. Transformative learning does not happen by itself, it takes place when learners face a radically different and incongruent situation or information that cannot be assimilated into their meaning perspective. Learners' experiences significantly affect their perspectives, an interpretation of experience which is a part of transformative learning.

Perspective transformation leading to transformative learning occurs infrequently. Mezirow (1997) believes that it usually results from a disorienting dilemma which is triggered by a life crisis or major life transition, although it may also result from an accumulation of transformations in meaning schemes over a period of

Evelyn Ngozi Offor

time. It involves experiencing a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions (Bamber & Hankin, 2011).

Among other ways in which transformative learning enhances quality education, according to Cranton (1994), is that students engaging in transformative learning have the tendency of being civic-minded, as they would have, an understanding of the complex issues and problems encountered in modern society, both at the local and national levels. In order to help solve societal problems, civic minded graduates need to have the ability to communicate well with others. This includes written and spoken proficiency as well as the art of listening to divergent points of view. Civically-minded graduates have a rich understanding of, sensitivity and acceptance of human diversity in the pluralistic society in which they live.

Major Challenges of Quality Education

Nigeria certificate in education in Nigeria faces several challenges which can be grouped under seven headings, which include; shortage of skilled man power; Weak leadership, management and governance, Problems of quality and relevance, poor funding and lack of capacity for diversification and Poor physical facilities and infrastructure.

Shortage of Skilled Man Power: There are shortages of skilled professionals in colleges of education in Nigeria as a result of this, the lecturers are overloaded. The Nigerian colleges of education ought to be the breeding grounds for the qualified teachers whom the continent need for man power at primary and junior secondary schools. They are plagued by critical shortage of teaching staff and research scholars. The situation is more serious with respect to the shortage of senior staff at levels of PhD. This is so, because senior staff of the colleges move over to the universities as soon as they get their PhD, the reason being that there are better conditions of service at the university. The situation is crippling not only the colleges of education but also affects the other levels of education services overall economic activities.

Weak Leadership, Management and Governance: Weak leadership, management and governance exacerbate the challenges faced by college of education in Nigeria. Management inefficiencies drain scarce resources away from the fundamental objectives of increasing access, quality and relevance and thinly spread human and financial resources. Underutilized facilities, duplicative program offerings, low student-staff ratios, high dropout and repetition rates, uneconomical procurement procedures, and allocation of a large share of the budget to non-educational expenditures are largely related to management and leadership inefficiencies and capacity limitations.

Pristine Academic leaders are rarely trained in the management of higher education institutions. Generally institution leaders at all levels are poor in strategic planning, market research and advocacy, research management, financial planning and management, human resource management, performance management and partnership building and networking skills.

Problems of Quality and Relevance

Nigerian Colleges of Education face a decline in quality of education, learning and research. They operate with overcrowded and deteriorating physical facilities, limited and obsolete library resources, insufficient equipment and instructional materials, outdated curricula, unqualified teaching staff, poorly prepared secondary students, and an absence of academic rigor and systematic evaluation of performance. Lack of access to the global knowledge pool and the international academic environment has a big contribution. There is a widespread concern in the relevance of curricula, as expressed by the overall mismatch between programs of study and labor market requirements. Institutions are generally ineffective at preparing students with applicable skills and reflecting the needs of the employment market. For example, agricultural education and training is often out of synch with labor market demands in terms of knowledge and practical competencies, especially in agribusiness, basic management and problem solving.

Poor Funding and Lack of Capacity for Diversification

Nigerian Colleges of Education are critically constrained by lack of adequate funding, due mainly to poor economic conditions, competing public service priorities, and weak support of the international community. Financial austerities have led to inability to employ more teaching staff which will help in minimizing staff student ratio, and poor learning and research facilities and resources.

Institutions are increasingly forced to diversify revenues, but usually with very limited experiences, expertise and capacity in managing these challenges of financial diversification and resource mobilization. The lack of adequate funding has constrained research capacities across the nation, influencing their competitiveness in knowledge generation and adaptation, as well as integration in the global knowledge society. The funding status of the higher institution especially those owned by government is another area that must be given attention in the process of transforming higher education in Nigeria. Presently, the budgetary allocation to education in general is less than the UNESCO standard of 26% of the total annual national budget. The poor funding status of higher education in Nigeria has negative effects on the level and quality of research in the institutions and also on the quality of the graduates of the institutions. Though,

Evelyn Ngozi Offor

government claimed that in recent time, more funding is available to tertiary institutions through complementary efforts of agencies like the Tertiary Education Task Fund (Tetfund); Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF); Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN); Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC); (USAID); JICA and DFID that provide facilities needed in the higher education sector existing situation and challenges confronting administrators of higher education institution in Nigeria confirms that such supports are not sufficient investment that can transform higher education in Nigeria. Government and other stakeholders in the education sector of Nigeria therefore need to increase the investment in education especially higher education. The administration and management of Tetfund need to be re-examined to eliminate corruption, misappropriation and mismanagement of the available slim fund (Okemakinde, 2014). Increasing funding of higher education will expand and transform infrastructures, teacher development capacities, laboratories and workshops and ICT facilities to mention a few.

Poor Physical Facilities and Infrastructure

Most of the Nigerian colleges of education have seen little or no infrastructure improvements for the last few decades. Learning infrastructure is widely deficient due to insufficient budget and overdependence on public financing. Infrastructure, such as internet access, modern library, textbooks, equipment, laboratories and classroom space are critical bottlenecks resulting in deterioration of quality of education and learning. The poor state of facilities also affects the quality of research and its ability to contribute to societal development and progress. Increasing number of students graduating from secondary schools led to corresponding pressures in the demand for higher education. The current rate of increase in higher education enrollment is doubling in five years.

Conclusion

Transformations in education are always the result and the symptom of social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. In order for people to feel at any particular moment the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged in which the former system is no longer adequate. There is no doubt that the state of education in Nigeria especially the Colleges of Education is in a lamentably poor and there are a lot of challenges, but there are perspectives and approaches that can be utilized to turn the situation around for better. There is the need to rise up to the challenges and change the course of events in Nigerian colleges of education and put education in a right track.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

Pristine

1. More staff should be employed in the Nigerian college of education especially academic staff to be able to meet up with the population explosion being witnessed in our institutions, so that the work load of the staff should be reduced.
2. Implementation of government policies should be enforced. Our government is good at making good policies but the problem lies on the implementation. Adequate monitoring of the implementation should be put in place.
3. More funds should be made available to the colleges of education in Nigeria alongside with other higher institution of learning. This will make room for proper and adequate infrastructural development.
4. More funds should be made available for staff development. This can come in form academic sponsorship such as Masters Degrees and PhD sponsorships.
5. The welfare of the staff should be enhanced so as to reduce the migration of staff from colleges of education to universities.

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Evelyn Ngozi Offor

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