

TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE ISSUE OF QUALITY

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Abstract

The development of any nation depends on the quality of her educational system and the success of the educational system depends on the calibre of teachers available to run the education industry. It has been said that no educational system can rise beyond the level of its teachers. The quality of the output of the educational system in Nigeria at all levels has been on the decline. This paper therefore x-rays the transformation of teacher education in the light of issues pertaining to quality. The following recommendations are made: those who train teachers should be committed and dedicated to their work; all stakeholders should put in place more financial support to fund teacher training institutions; there should be a paradigm shift from theoretical teaching to practical application of knowledge in all facets of studies in teacher training institutions; among others.

Key words: Teacher, Teacher Education, Quality

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The role education plays in any society cannot be over-emphasised. Education is the life wire of the society; it is the brain of the society; it is the key that unlocks the gate of development and advancement; it is the cement for building sustainable human development; it is a veritable tool for national growth and development. Education is at the heart of both personal and community development, its mission is to enable individuals, without exception, develop all their talents to the fullest and to realise their creative potentials, including responsibility for their own lives and achievement of personal aims. (UNESCO, 1996 cited in Unite for Quality Education, 2013). Societies depend on education via the activities of the school for developing and training her citizens (Ochoma, 2015).

For any nation to have world-class schools, such a nation must have a world-class teaching force. Teachers constitute the teaching force in all nations of the world. A teacher is that person who is formally trained and equipped with the relevant skills, knowledge and competencies to help others acquire needed knowledge and skills for functional living (Victor-Ishikaku & Nyenwe, 2014). The teacher is equipped with relevant qualities which enables him to effectively manage the classroom through specialised training in a teacher education programme. It is expected that a teacher knows the subject he teaches well and be able to stir the imagination of those entrusted to him (that is, the learners). The programme that equips teachers for their unique role is referred to as “teacher education”. The products of teacher education are saddled with the responsibility of teaching the younger ones so that the goals of the educational system of the nation can be achieved.

The development of any nation depends on the quality of her educational system. The educational system mirrors the era in which it is operating and the society’s expectation of teachers varies from one era to the other. The present era has been variously described but one underlying factor is that it is highly knowledge dominated (Afemikhe, n.d.). The rate at which knowledge is increasing is alarming. The worth of any management is based on its ability to produce quality products and satisfy clients and other stakeholders (Okemakinde, 2014). This is applicable to the education industry. The ability of the education industry to produce quality products is what counts.

Unfortunately however, a large number of the products of the educational system in Nigeria cannot be described as satisfactory. For instance, Omoregie (2005) cited in Ekundayo (2010) lamented that the products of today’s secondary system can neither usefully live in the society nor move into higher institution without their parents’ aid or forgery, stressing further that they cannot think for themselves or respect the views and feelings of others. Arong & Ogbadu (2010) commented that it will be an

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understatement to say that if there is any issue which borders, burdens and most debated among educational stake holders and the generality of Nigerian populace today, is the issue of declining quality in education. He observed that only 20% of Nigerian graduates have quality education that will enable them compete for jobs in the labour market, while the remaining 80% do not have sound education. The 80% without sound/quality education were taught by teachers who are supposed to have passed through one teacher education programme or the order.

The decline in the quality of education is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. The Norwegian Agency for Development (2015) reported that 250 million children can neither read nor write and that 130 million of these have attended school for at least four years. In order to tackle the problem of decline in Nigerian's educational system, the issue of quality in teacher education is of paramount importance as teacher education is the body saddled with the responsibility of training teachers, those in charge of educating the younger members of the nation. Iwuagwu (2006) rightly pointed out that teachers are the main determinant of quality of education all over the world.

The Concept of Teacher Education

The concept 'teacher education' has to do with the specialised training given to would-be teachers in a formal school system to equip them with knowledge, skills and competencies to function as teachers. Achuonye (2004) viewed it as a preplanned, articulated set of activities which are intended to help a trainee teacher to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies needed to function as a resourceful, effective, and efficient teacher. Denga (2001) cited in Maduwesi & Ofejebe (2006) remarked that it is the process of preparing or developing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to effectively direct learning situations. To Taylor (2016), it is any of the formal programmes that have been established for the preparation of teachers at the elementary and secondary school levels.

Afemikhe (n.d.) pointed out that it must be realised that the training of teachers should reflect our conception of the goals of education as they will dictate the teachers' roles. One of the goals of teacher education in Nigeria as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (2013 p.56) is to "produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system". This by implication refers to teachers that are enthusiastic, thorough, careful and have the desire to do the work of teaching well. It is such calibre of teachers that can impact on the educational system of the nation. Such teachers have acquired pedagogical and methodological skills required to function as effective teacher. They have undergone series of learning that equip and qualify them teachers.

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It is sad to note that a large number of persons who claim to be teachers are ill-equipped for the job of teaching or were not trained in the first place, to be teachers. Amaele (2003) observed that many people who handle chalk and talk in our schools are not teachers, but those who sought for jobs where they belong but could not get and thus resolved to mangle teaching. This has a very damaging effect as nobody can give what he or she does not have.

History of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria has come a long way to the state we see it today. It began in Nigeria during the missionary era and then, each mission trained teachers to meet the needs of their missions. A training institute was established in Abeokuta by 1859 which was later moved to Lagos in 1867 and finally to Oyo in 1896 as St. Andrew's College. Hope Wadel Teacher training Institute was also established by the Christian Missionary Society (C. M. S.) in Calabar in 1859. When the regions began to manage their education system, they opened their own teacher education schools. By 1952 there were about forty two teacher training colleges in Nigeria. (Ofojebe, 2006; Achuonye, 2007).

When the colonial government took over the administration of schools, they saw the need to harmonise the activities of the education system. The Phelp Stokes Commission was then inaugurated for this task in 1922. The commission reported that there was the need to: train more teachers; employ temporarily, lower qualified teachers who will teach under supervision; separate the educational needs for training teachers and that of other professions.

The Phelp Stroke Commission gave rise to 1926 education code which saw the need for introduction of higher elementary certificate examination and the standard, a four year teacher training programme for the award of teacher third class certificate (Higher Elementary Certificate) and registration of teachers. Teachers were then registered under three categories: those with university degree or diploma; those with technical qualification; and those without teacher training with minimum of standard 1 or secondary class 2 with minimum of two years teaching experience.

In 1959, the Ashby commission was set up to look into the state of the education system. Amongst its recommendations was to upgrade the Advanced Teacher College to college of education in 1961. This led to many colleges of education springing up and being affiliated to universities to award higher degrees. Presently, the colleges of education man and award Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE); those affiliated to the university man and award Bachelors of Education (B.ED) programmes in addition to

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NCE; while universities man and award B.ED, B.A. and B.SC. ED. programmes. The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Teachers Institute (NTI) were established to man and co-ordinate the teacher education programmes for better performance.

Teacher Education curriculum began formally with the award of higher elementary certificate (TC3), then Teacher Grade (TC2), Advanced Teacher's Certificate (ATC), Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and presently, Masters (M.Ed) Doctor of philosophy (PhD) in education. The programme of teacher education presently can be done at the following levels: NCE; B.A/B.Sc, ED/B.ED; PGDE; M.Ed and PhD. While the NCE programme lasts for about three years, B.A/B.Sc, ED/B.ED lasts for about four years, PGDE about 1 year, M.Ed about two years; and PhD about three years. The curriculum content of teacher education encompasses: General Studies (basic academic subjects); Educational foundation courses (principle and practice of education); Studies related to the students' intended field of teaching, that is teaching subject/area of specialisation; Teaching Practice (internship); and Project writing.

The reforms that the teacher education has gone through are necessitated by the dynamics of the society and the need to meet national objectives. Though these reforms are laudable, their positive effects are yet to be felt as the happening in the society are indices to this fact. Moreover, some challenges that plague teacher education programmes in Nigeria are pointers to the fact that a lot more need to be done for teacher education to be able to measure up to expectation. The challenges range from problems associated with funding to those associated with teacher trainers as a result of lack of commitment, lack of methodological and pedagogical skills, lack of knowledge of information technique, and so on; and then the society particularly, the negative perception of the teacher.

Amaele (2003) remarked that observations and studies have revealed that the programmes put in place to train teachers for the education industry raised enough teachers (numerically) and so the problem today is no longer on number of trained teachers to man the country's various institutions of learning but on the quality and distribution of teachers.

The Concept of Quality and Quality in Education

Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (ISO 8402-1986 standard). Quality determines how much and how well children (learners) learn and the extent to which their education translates into a range of personal, social and developmental benefits

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(Grima, 2008). Quality will depend on what kind of education the teacher has as well as the teacher's personal qualities (Norwegian Agency for Development, 2015).

Education quality refers to achievement of planned education goals particularly in terms of the learners' education outcomes. Quality education is the education that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being (VVOB Education for Development, 2015). It is the education that enables people to develop all of their attributes and skills to achieve their potential as human beings and memberships of society (Unite for Quality Education, 2013). Good quality education provided by trained and supported teachers is the right of all children, youth and adults, not the privilege of the few (World Education Forum, 2015). High quality education is a prerequisite for learning and human development (Norwegian Agency for Development, 2015). For an educational system to be of good quality, it must satisfy the need of the society in question.

Six crucial dimensions of quality education as outlined by VVOB Education for Development (2015) are: equity, contextualization and relevance, child-friendly teaching and learning, sustainability, balanced approach and learning outcome. After completing a certain level of education, the learner must have developed minimum standard of skill that will enable him to be functional. This off course requires a result-oriented approach.

Okemakinde (2014) noted that quality delivery begins from policy makers to resource providers, policy implementers and students. It is thus the responsibility of all stakeholders to ensure that there is quality in education. Quality is affected by factors both within and outside the classroom. For there to be quality output, the outcome of the educational system, the quality of input and the processing quality must contribute favourably.

The Quality of Input

This encompasses what is on ground before the commencement of the training of the would-be teacher. For the quality of input to be worthwhile, appropriate entrance requirements for instance, must be specified. The individuals applying to be trained should meet the requirement in terms of number of credits obtained at O' Level; the ability of the candidate in JAMB examination if any, as some come in through direct entry; aptitude test performance; etc. Beyond a show of certificate and high scores in examinations, measures should be taken to ensure that the candidates are truly qualified to be taken in. This can be done by conducting an interview whereby the candidates

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come in contact with some of the personalities in the institution like the head of the department they intend to understudy.

Criteria for admission should be clearly specified. Anything less than the specified standard should not be considered. Moreover, merit and excellence should be institutionalised while tribalism and nepotism should be expunged in the course of admitting candidates. At this level too, facilities such as the human resources to teach/train the trainee teacher is very vital; lecture halls; etc. All these must meet with pre-specified criteria before taking in candidates into teacher training programme.

The Processes Quality

This involves the use of pedagogical principles by lecturers to enable teacher-trainee acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. It has to do with the quality of service delivery. Good teachers would beget good students from which the system can get a replenishment of its teaching stock, while poor teachers will beget poor students and consequently poorer future teachers (Afemikhe, n.d.; Afemikhe, 1995). The quality of the trainer of the trainee teacher is very important. All qualities ascribed to a good teacher should be portrayed and imbibed. Who the trainer is will determine what will become of the trainee teacher. Moreover, most teacher training institutions in Nigeria still adopt traditional methods of teaching and learning. Transformation of teacher education will involve current teaching methods that lay emphasises on practical application of knowledge rather than theoretical teaching and also computer based teaching (CBT).

Other variables within the processing quality that merit attention here are: quality of teaching practice and quality of facilities, materials and infrastructure.

Quality of Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is an essential aspect of teacher education programme. It is a period of guided teaching during which the would-be teacher assumes responsibility of directing the learning of a group of learners for a specific period of time. Through teaching practice exercise, necessary pre-service teaching experiences are acquired. Without adequate and worthwhile teaching practice, the teacher training programme is incomplete. Okujagu and Osah-Ogulu (2002) cited in Uzoeshi and Asuru (n.d.) pointed out that the field experience helps the trainee teacher to perfect his professional skills, effective instructional performance and creative problem-solving and collegial relational skill in the role of a professional teacher of his special subject. Onifade (1999) asserted that through the teaching practice exercise, the improvement of educational standards is assured and guaranteed.

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More often than not however, the teaching practice exercise is not being taken seriously by the would-be teachers and also the supervisor(s) assigned to assess the former right in the field of the practice school. A lot of malpractices go on during the exercise such as teacher trainee absenting themselves from the exercise and then finding a way to falsely justify their absence; supervisor(s) demanding money and ending up not assessing the candidates rightly and then assigning undue scores; supervisor(s) refusal to see the candidates in their schools of practice but rather requesting that they come with their lesson notes to places other than the schools of practice where the students they were supposed to use for practice will not be present; etc. Afemikhe (n.d.) remarked that experience has shown that the supervision of teaching practice exercise leaves much to be desired as it is rushed and in most cases, the feedback component seems to have been trivialised.

Quality of Facilities, Materials and Infrastructure

It is very necessary that the learning environment, learning resource centre and laboratories should all be properly put in place to promote effective teaching and learning in any teacher education programme just as it should be in any other teaching and learning programme. Okemakinde, Adewuyi & Alabi (2013) remarked that there must be a conscious effort to increase teacher education through provision of conducive learning environment. This off course will require adequate funding. Unfortunately, funding of the educational system has been a major challenge in the educational sector.

Facilities and materials on ground need to be constantly improved. For instance, with the growth of information and technology, other kinds of facilities and materials are needed for trainee teachers to be given the right training that will equip them to match the challenges for the 21st century. Computers and internet services are thus needed and this calls for constant supply of electricity which at the moment is very erratic.

For the practicing teachers, their knowledge needs to be constantly improved. This implies that continuous in-service training is necessary. Experience has shown that majority of the teachers are not willing to be trained to meet the demand of the time especially as far as computer training is concerned. Teachers slated for training should endeavour to take advantage of such opportunity and defaulters should be subjected to disciplinary act.

Quality of Output

This is concerned with the end product of the educational system, the outcome of the educational process. Quality of output is determined by the quality of input and processing quality, “garbage in garbage out”. Oyewumi & Fatoki (2015) remarked that

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quality in output does not come by chance, that it requires carefully planned and deliberate effort. The trainee teachers need to be trained to be: versed so that they can adapt themselves to the dynamism of life within and outside their country; able to meet national and international standard; master of their subject; able to stir the imagination of the learners they have to teach after their graduation.

Conclusion

No doubt teacher education needs transformation as reforms put in place before now are not adequate enough to equip most of the products of teacher education programmes in order to be able to function effectively and efficiently. For this to be achieved, global best practices that ensure that quality is attained must be adopted. A total overhaul of the system is necessary and quality at all levels is of great necessity. Most importantly, attention must be given to how teachers are being prepared for the task ahead of them. It should not be business as usual. To attain quality education, teacher training institutions must turn out quality products who will man the education sector.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions and conclusion reached in this work, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Those who train teachers should be committed and dedicated to their work. They should thoroughly and adequately equip trainee teachers with pedagogical as well as content skills so that on graduation, the trainee teachers will be competent enough to teach whatever subject they studied.
2. All stakeholders – the government, teacher education institutions, and so on should put in place more financial support to fund teacher training institutions so that facilities and materials needed for proper training will be made available.
3. There should be a paradigm shift from theoretical teaching to practical application of knowledge in all facets of studies in teacher training institutions.
4. Those without teaching qualification should not be employed to teach at any level of education.
5. Practicing teachers should be re-trained from time to time so that they can keep abreast with current practices in the field of education.

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