
REFORMING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study conducts a comprehensive assessment of teacher education in Nigeria in view of the dynamism of the constantly changing social, economic and political structure. This study presents information on how teachers training and continuous professional development can positively influence the socio economic development of Nigeria which will meet the challenges of the 21st century. This is because teachers are very important in the overall development of any society through their impact in the educational system. It is obvious that teacher education is a process of continuous updating of teachers knowledge, skills and interest in their chosen career. Nevertheless, through teacher education, teachers have contributed to national developments, they also participate in creating awareness among the citizens. Teachers are the real agents that help in the development of various skills and competencies. In line with this, the challenges of teacher education was also discussed thus, proffering solutions to it. It should be noted that the more good teachers the nation has, the more the solid citizens and hence more development of the country. However, it was recommended that the development of teachers, adequate rewards, good welfare packages, and incentive plans and motivation should be encouraged and sustained.

Keywords: Reforming, Teacher education, Professional development, Knowledge, National development.

Introduction

Teacher education is not a new term in the field of education. It should be a part of the daily concern of governments, manpower planners, social reformers and indeed of parents and students demanding a fair share in education and a greater participation in national life. Teacher education have become much more advanced and is marked by a growing sense of urgency and practicality. This is due to the fact that there are no longer satisfactory answers to educational problems within the country and discipline. Teachers initiate and determine what happens to educational policies, curriculum guidelines, the use to which teaching-learning materials are put, the ability to impart individuals to be self-reliant in the society and the fate of a nation's huge investments in education. What teachers do, or do not do, are willing or not willing to do, what they do properly or poorly determines to a large extent, the effectiveness of educational curriculum. The Nigerian government is very much aware of the crucial responsibilities of teachers in the implementation of educational policies that are required to promote national development. The National Policy on Education (2014) states that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that the purpose of teacher education is to produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient teachers. The Nigerian educational system has witnessed a lot in the area of policy formulation, programmes and recommendations from different task forces, ministries, commissions, committees, workshops, seminars and meetings on how best to produce highly motivated teachers to enable them train and bring up good and competent individuals. That is why the government of Nigeria agreed that the quality of teacher education should continually undergo reform with a view to achieving good results for the education system through professional preparation of individuals for the assignment of teaching and nation-building (Ikedingwu, 2015). The manpower produced by educational system service all sectors of the national development. For our education system to be sustained, teacher education reform should produce highly motivated and efficient teachers to fit into the social life of every community and to enhance their commitment to national goals and development (Afe, 2013). In the educational institution, there is need to design training and development programmes for newly employed staff. This will help to improve their standards of performance and also the standard of education in the country. Teachers on

their own are also encouraged to undertake in-service training programmes for staff improvement. Teachers should be trained as men and women who constitute the greatest human agents of social change. However, a very close examination also indicates that a gap still exist in the actual implementation of programmes, policies and ideas on teacher education thus policies and programmes have not been adequately matched with the implementation process, this has resulted in the production of grossly ill-motivated and frustrated teachers in our society. Thus, the gap between professed teaching behaviours in teacher education courses and actual teaching behaviours in the classrooms is also wide. Teachers are the producers of the future leaders with assurance of their own future. Most teacher education graduates are not given the opportunity to serve, rather the government is busy employing untrained, physically and psychological unfit persons in the teaching profession at all levels of the education system. Omolewa (2011). These has generally made the enthusiasm and zeal of the Nigeria teachers in performing their duties very low and has been damped by both role conflicts and intimidation by the parents and government. This has forced teachers to relent in performing their professional and legitimate roles below expectation owing to the harsh economic situation in Nigeria, even though teachers' conditions of service have been a bit improved. It is therefore logical to conclude that there is a neglect of teacher education and teachers effort towards the development of the nation. Majason (2015).

Teaching Profession

Professionalism is a complex, dynamic and an elusive concept. To (Costen, 2016), it is a specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes designed to provide unique services to meet the educational needs of the individual and society. The choice of learning activities whereby the goals of education are realized in the school is the responsibility of the teaching profession. In addition to providing students with learning opportunities, it meets curriculum outcomes, emphasizes the development of values and guide students in their social and economic relationships. Teaching profession is based on the concept of teachers as experts who have been assigned specialized tasks by the society. It is a demanding job that requires in-depth knowledge of subject content, age specific pedagogy and many varied skills such as patience, leadership and creativity just to mention but a few. It demands sensitivity of personnel involvement in teaching activities towards

growth and development of the profession. (Onwukwe, 2016). Teaching profession has a common code of ethics which guides the behaviour and conducts of teachers in their institutions and outside. A code of professional ethics is a charter of rights and duties for the protection of professional autonomy and freedom. This can ensure development of high degree of recognition and social status of the profession so that true professionalism emerges in the long run and they are committed to their profession in a true perspective. Teaching should be regarded as a profession thus, it calls for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the students in their charge. This processes must be free of discriminatory practices and should contribute to the holistic development of student who are actively engaged, responsible and contributing members of a democratic society.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education is associated with both theory and practice. It refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, community and the society. The National Policy of Education was born out of the National curriculum conference held in Lagos in September 1969. In 1977 the Federal Military Government issued the first white paper on the National Policy on Education which contained the recommendation of the 1973 national seminar on this subject, thus indicating that the Federal Government had accepted the recommendations in principle. Teacher education is dealt with in Section 9 of the National Policy on Education (1981) document. The document emphasizes the importance of teacher education right from its opening paragraph, where it declares that: Teacher Education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teachers are known to be responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies. As a result of these important and multiple roles teachers play in the educational system, teachers' professional education requires careful planning and execution. The history of teacher education in Nigeria is tied up with the efforts of experts in teacher education to fashion the best and most appropriate teacher education programmes for teachers in Nigeria at given period. The National Policy on Education provided

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a solid framework for such changes and challenges, yet much has not been achieved in teacher development in Nigeria. Bearing that framework in mind, the implementation of the latest teacher education programme is to be examined under the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2008). To enhance the quality of education therefore, provision should be made for the production of highly dedicated, devoted and competent teachers. This observation was probably considered in the formulation of the five objectives of teacher education in the Nigeria National Policy document. According to the policy document, Teacher Education aims at:

- 1) Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system.
- 2) Encouraging further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- 3) Helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.
- 4) Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world.
- 5) Enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2004).

Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The challenges of teacher education in Nigeria as enumerated by Ajang (2010) includes;

- 1) Non professionalization of teaching; Many teachers in Nigeria have not measured upto the minimum international standards, this is because a large number of untrained and half backed personnel are still retained in the system this has made teaching un-professionalized. Many unqualified teachers are still in the employment of some state teaching boards and ministries while most higher educated lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes the training mandatory and pursues the policy vigorously, teaching will continue to be open to anyone and this situation holds the potentials of further eroding professionalism in teaching profession.
- 2) Quality assurance and internal efficiency issues; The academic and emotional qualities of intending candidates for teacher education are critical for quality assurance and internal efficiency in teaching profession. In Nigeria tertiary schools a trend has been evolving to the effect that candidates who apply to higher institutions for teacher education are those who have either

been denied admission in their choice areas of study or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular professional courses as medicine, law, engineering etc. The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2013) recommends that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. In more developed countries like United Kingdom, applicants are compulsorily expected to possess certain intellectual qualities and personal characteristics before they are admitted for training. In contrast, the Nigerian universities and colleges of education conduct student's admissions primarily on obtaining the minimum academic requirements while other internationally recognized pre requisites such as emotional stability, physical fitness or qualities, moral uprightness and communication proficiencies are hardly given considerations.

3) Poor policy implementation: This is a challenge to quality delivery of teacher education. Poor quality delivery is responsible for the low performance of teacher graduates from the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Our policies are written with foresight for the future but the problem comes with translating theory into practice during implementation. Several factors can be responsible for inhibiting the smooth implementation of educational policies and thereby resulting to poor quality delivery. Government underfunding of education and injudicious utilization of available funds by implementation agencies can make education which learners receive to become worthless.

4) Insufficient knowledge and use of information communication technology (ICT); Another great challenge of teacher education in Nigeria is the use of ICT in a globalizing world. The knowledge and use of computer technology and internet is a necessity for all teachers to guarantee the relevance of the system and its products in the 21st century. Many schools in Nigeria still operates the traditional education system with little or no adaptation to ICT to benefit from the ubiquity of information and to facilitate communication among professional networks. For our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times.(UNESCO,2013)

5) Poor conditions of service and brain drain: In Nigeria, teachers condition of service lacks enough incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigeria schools. Consequently, the weakening attraction to the teaching profession and by extension, the resultant dwindling enrollment in the teacher education programmes, those who remain in the profession maintain relatively low social

status with accompanying psychological impacts. The quality or standard of education in Nigeria has deduced in recent years because of other factors and the brain drain phenomenon, that is, the drift of many brilliant, intelligent, committed and more experienced teachers and university lecturers to countries where they were offered better remunerations and conditions of service. This contributes to the lowering status of education in the universities, colleges of education as well as secondary and primary schools even as the trend impacts on the economy negatively.

Reforming teacher education

In reforming teacher education, teachers must become skilled in content and context if student, based education is to be realized. Teachers, students and parents are to be involved in developing policies to ensure a school culture of character and academics. Moreover teachers are encouraged to ensure local engagement with schools and that schools are responsive to local contexts within a framework of core standards and principles. Individual schools should be able to adapt to the needs of the local community and provide a relevant curriculum that takes account of local concerns and priorities. Harper, (2012). The Nigerian teacher is specifically named in relation to the work he/she is to undertake and the training he/she will need at the local level. He/she is to be responsive and engaged in the local context in meeting the UNESCO (2004) global policies and initiatives as well. Thus, in reforming teacher education, the following needs are to be considered in its entirety.

- The balance between theory and practice
- Universal teacher education curricula with programme contents and underlying epistemological concepts clearly synchronized for delivery.
- The significance of in-depth content knowledge of subjects that teachers are prepared to teach including expected competencies and programme evaluation.
- The consistency between the stated goals and principles of the programme, their structures and implementation including training systems and process assessment.
- Requirement of uniformity of professional certification both locally and globally.
- The scope and organisation of school practice should be universal.

- There should be adequate programme resources including appropriate institutional environment for effective and efficient take off of all programmes.
- Global and national recognition of teaching as a profession that require certification before professional teachers can practice.
- A rigorous entry requirement procedure to select those who really want to be teachers.
- There should be specific entry and exit competencies
- Like any recognized profession, the length of training should be rigorous with protracted practical practice component that will prepare the teacher to face the real challenges of the teaching-learning environment.

There is absolute need for participatory teacher education as such, teachers in training should play active role in the training process. Teachers should become participants in decisions regarding the needs to which their training must respond, what problems must be resolved in the day-to-day work environment and what specific knowledge and skills must be transmitted to them. In the participatory model teachers must be self-directed and self-taught. Every aspect of the training must be based on reflection and introspection. The needs, problems, statuses and roles of teachers must be clearly defined, examined and analysed by them. The actual concrete experiences of working with students should be emphasized. Teachers must be able to collectively examine and analyze their consequences as assisted by the trainers in solving problems.

Improving Teacher Education for socio economic development in Nigeria

In the world today, educators play a significant role in molding the lives and careers of individuals. Thus, teacher education should be improved to enhance the nation's citizenry for socio economic development. These can be achieved through the following as proposed by Majasan, (2015).

- *Skill development:* There is widespread consensus that our education systems are failing to adequately prepare all students with the essential 21st century knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in life, career and citizenship. Today, meeting our Nigeria's challenges demands educational excellence, socio economic independence with alternative technologies and jobs and strengthening of the health care system.

These require a skilled populace that is ready for the critical challenges we face or are facing. A focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration is essential to prepare students for the future.

- *In-depth content Knowledge:* In present situation, there is a special need for teachers to master two types of knowledge. First is the deep knowledge of the subject content itself and the knowledge of the curricular development. To teach students according to today's standards, teachers need to understand the subject matter deeply and flexibly so they can help students create useful cognitive maps and relate one idea to another. This kind of understanding provides a foundation for pedagogical content knowledge that enables teachers to make ideas accessible to others. This will also enable them to improve teaching to suit all kinds of learners.
- *Increased research activities;* At present, appropriate research activities and forward thinking is expected from a professional teacher that they will continuously up-date their knowledge and skills. They should never be satisfied with their status quo so long as academics is concerned as learning is a life long process. There should be continuous efforts to match the teaching and learning styles of the learners. Teacher education institutions should provide facilities and programmes for teachers that will motivate them for research that will aid them meet the socio economic challenges of the nation.
- *Construction of multimedia-based curriculum for teacher education:* The curriculum of teacher education should be relevant in the context of changing patterns in society and technology. There is a great need of construction of multimedia-based curriculum of teacher education thus teachers need to develop their skills and knowledge to thoughtfully integrate content, pedagogy and technologies in their teaching. To be effective in the 21st century, teachers must be able to create, evaluate, and effectively utilize information, media and technology.
- *Adequate Funding;* Finance has always been a vital factor in the educational sector especially in teacher education programmes. In Nigeria, sectors competing with education are many, existing resources must thus be shared between these competing areas of need. Ocho

(2010) observed that to create suitable socio economic environment for teaching and learning, government and educational stakeholders should produce the materials and equipment for teaching as financial outlay is a necessity. Ukeje (2011) highlighted the centrality of financial provision in the advancement of educational objectives, when he observed that the “issue of educational financing is clearly the central pivot”. This is so because the vital issue of the nature, quantity, quality and efficacy of educational system largely depend on the level as well as the appropriateness and management of the financial provision. Government and educational stakeholders should make more funds available for the enhancement of teacher education to spur the socio economic development of Nigeria.

However, in Nigeria, teacher education is productive oriented rather than consumer oriented. Teacher education as it exists in the country today, if not adapted to the demands of changing needs, would be impossible to shape our educational system in the desired direction of knowledge. In order to lessen these evils and problems, our education system is demanding a revolution in the process and content of teacher education programme to improve the socio economic development of Nigeria.

Recommendation

The recommendations provided in this case are;

- There should be common-core teacher education and training curricula.
- Government and education stakeholders should provide adequate funds for financing educational programmes especially while in service including adequate rewards, good welfare packages, good incentive plans and motivation should be encouraged and sustained.
- On the job training programmes for self-development and enhancement should be made compulsory for teachers in every level of education especially in the area of Information Communication Technology.
- Research must be considered as a core subject to equip the 21st century educator with content, practical knowledge and skills to be able to attend to day-to-day learning problems that maybe encountered.

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