

## TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONALIZING TEACHING IN NIGERIA FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

Nigerian federation is an embodiment of social institutions that are manned by trained personnel produced by teachers; and that these institutions function collectively for national development, propelled our quest for the professionalization of teaching. The engineers, medical doctors, lawyers, military officers, police officers, co'ticians, accountants, pilots, scientists, etc, are made by teachers through teaching. It is therefore imperative that entrance into teaching be controlled and regulated by a professional body and this led to the recently established Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (Act 31 of 1993), charged with these responsibilities. Therefore, the rofessionalization of teaching and making the teacher the centre of educational reform in Nigeria, will enhance teachers' productivity, and reduce the systemic problems in the educational sector and place education as instrument par excellence for national development. This paper will thus, examine teacher education and professionalizing teaching in Nigeria for national development.

Education can be conceived as that systematic process of developing the individual physically,mentally, spiritually and socially for his own benefit and for the benefit of the society in which he lives (Osaigbovo, 2007:3), The universal saying that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers has gained some prominence in Nigeria and hence the emphasis given to teacher's education in the national policy on education (NPE 1977, revised 1981, 1998

& 2004). It is because of the emphasis on teacher education that the policy document specified that "all teachers in our educational institutions from primary to university will be professionally trained".

Education the world over is "instrument par excellence for effecting national development" (FGN, 2004). It is inevitable tool for sustainable development. It is the vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge

(Fadipe, 2000 & Abdulkareem, 2001). It is a tool for human capital development necessary for economic growth and development (Ojogho & Ogunu, 2003). Education stimulates and accelerates development in other sectors of society. It is the bedrock of national integration in Nigeria (Jaja, 2007; Agba, Ushie & Agba, 2007). The economic, social and political status of any nation, indeed the very fabric of human society depends on education {Kelly, 1995; Emeh & Ogaboh, 2010).

**Sequel to this, effort by successive governments have been geared towards addressing the over publicized issues, giving little or no attention to the profession of 'teaching' and 'the teacher'. The fact that no educational system can rise above its teachers; and no nation can experience remarkable development without quality teachers has been consistently ignored. The writer's position therefore, is that the professionalization of teaching and making 'the teacher' the centre of educational sector, place education as instrument par excellence for national development. These papers thus, examine teacher education and professionalizing teaching in Nigeria, and its implications for national development.**

### **Teacher Education**

Socially, politically and economically the world is changing at a dramatic rate. Hence, it is certainly not possible to foresee any slowing in the pace over the decade. As the world has changed, so has the school, and so has

what we mean by teaching and by learning. The teacher-student relationship is far more complex and demanding than ever before. The implication of this more diversified role for the teacher is what impelled a new view of the process of teacher education and training. Thus, teacher education is seen as a continuous process, beginning with a phase of initial training and continuing throughout the teacher's professional life throughout regular and sustained periods of in-service training. Maintaining the view that a teacher must remain a learner during the scope of their service is mandatory a teacher must complete some sort of teacher education before becoming a full-time teacher. In most cases, a teaching candidate will enroll in a teacher training programme at the college or university, thus allowing them opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in education. A student may then choose to continue his or her teacher education by obtaining a master's degree, Ph.D., or professional certificate. Once a bachelor's degree is completed, however, a teacher may instead choose to take the necessary exams for certification and begin teaching immediately. Most school districts require a teacher to work full-time or fulfill other educational requirements as he or she teaches; this often involves earning a master's degree in education or other field that will improve the teacher's knowledge, skills, and techniques for delivering instruction in the classroom. Once a teacher secures a position of teaching in a school, the first few years of teaching may be spent under

the tutelage of a more experienced teacher or administrator. This is sometimes considered part of teacher education and is meant to allow the teacher a mentor under whom he or she can learn new skills and adapt to a new environment. Once that phase is over, or while that phase is underway. A teacher will be responsible for developing short-and-long-term goals for furthering his or her education (WiseGeek, 2012). This process of continuing education within the teaching realm is sometimes known as professional development, and it may include any number of activities that improve the teacher's ability to teach. Many teachers take part in online or distance learning classes that adapt to his or her teaching schedule, while others may participate in on-site classes at a community college, four-year college, or university. To this end, teacher education is perfectly poised to promote education for sustainable national development.

### **Concept of Professionalization**

A profession is an occupation or vocation that requires skills, knowledge of some departments of learning and qualifications to do, especially one with high social status. It is a job that utilizes functional education and mental abilities rather than manual or physical labour. According to Dada and Fadokun (2010), profession entails an occupation that is dependent upon specialized intellectual study and training. For the provision of skilled service to other members of 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 liberal or formal educational qualification. Pratte and Rury (1991) argued that a profession is an occupation with enviable remuneration and high social status. Similarly Cook and Cook (1960) cited in Orubite (2010:2-3) viewed profession as "occupation in which members acquire a body of systematic knowledge on which their work with people is based, develop on in-group feeling of belonging and responsibility, assume an attitude of moral concern toward clients and join together in association to advance" the vocation and control member's conduct through established ethics.

These definitions show distinct characteristics that could be attached to a vocation or occupation to portray them as profession. Some of these characteristics are extensive but may not include every attribute that has even been ascribed to professions. This is because, the search for standardized criteria by which a vocation/occupation can be recognized as a profession has been on for years; yet there is still disagreement on a universally acceptable list of the characteristics of a profession (Dado S Fadokun, 2010). However in this paper, the writer attempts to highlight areas of wide consensus among scholars on the characteristics of a profession. These include:

- i. Provision of essential social services (Okeke, 2004; Richards 2008).

- ii. Possession of specialized knowledge or skills through a long period of training (Buckley & Buckley, 1974; Ajayi, 2007; Dada & Fadokun, 2010).
- iii. Code of ethics and kind of control over the quality of membership (Okeke, 2004; Dada & Fadokun, 2010).
- iv. High degree of autonomy for individual practitioner and for the occupational group (Baylse, 1981; Pratte & Rury, 1991; Ajayi, 2007; Orubite, 2010).
- v. Exalt service above personal gains (Yusuf, 2010). That is emphasis is laid on services rendered to society rather than economy of financial gain of practitioners,
- vi. High social status, rewards and recognition by the public (Wikipedia, 2008; 2010; Yusuf, 2010).
- vii. Professional association which is usually a self-governing or gonization of members or practitioners (Levine 1988; Ajayi, 2008).

### **Is Teaching a Profession?**

The status of teaching as a profession in Nigeria as in elsewhere has been a contentious issue over the years. Some scholars have argued in favour while others against. In some quarters, teaching is seen as a semi-profession (Robards, 2008). According to Abdal-Haqq (1992) when teaching is examined within the traditional perceptions of what constitutes a profession, certain attributes are missing.

First, teaching lacks clear defined, codified and accessible knowledge base and where it exists, it has not been codified or useful.

Ajayi (2004) observed that teaching meets the more accepted characteristics of a profession partly 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. Orubites (2010) posited that the contention among teachers at various levels (Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions) on who is more superior impede the professionalization of teaching, making teaching to lack the basic prerequisite of being a full profession.

Goodlard (1990) argued that autonomy and self governance is principally missing in teaching. Although the decree setting up Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria was promulgated in 1993, it is not yet fully operational, consequently, autonomy in teaching is significantly absent in and the vocation is yet to receive full professional status in Nigeria (Dada & Fadakun, 2010).

Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (2005:3) argued that "teaching is the oldest and noblest of all professions. The Engineers, Lawyers, Pharmacists, Medical Doctors, and others are all made by the teacher. But over the years things appeared to have changed for the worse. In status and qualities, there is the need to

enact Code of Conduct to define the minimum standards expected of a professional teacher". It could be observed that teaching before now, was a profession in Nigeria but lost her glory as a distinct profession; thus there is need to professionalize teaching again.

### **Teacher Education and National Development in Nigeria**

Education is the gateway to national development. No educational system can succeed without the teacher. The teacher is paramount in national development. In this paper, national development entails establishing or building "a free democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens" (FGN, 2004:6). It involves the total transformation of society, making humanity the focus of the development drive and seeking to develop man's potentialities in a total sense. It includes the maximum improvement of the material, social, cultural and political well being of society, National development includes reduction of poverty, wealth creation and equitable distribution of wealth, ensuring nutrition and health, housing and ancillary services, social security and welfare (Mohammed, 1991). It entails building capacities to advance material and human capital for effective production of good and services.

The national development goals of Nigeria formed the foundation upon which the national policy on education was built. It was formed with the belief that education would serve as instrument for national transformation. Education in this regard was to foster development of manpower to man the various sectors or institution of society. Education was meant to formulate ideas for national development and promote progressive and united Nigeria.

Unfortunately education is yet to achieve its objective in Nigeria. The country is still trapped in a vicious cycle of underdevelopment and political/religious upheavals that threaten national unity. The people are still engulfed in ignorance, disease and ooverty (Agbodike, 1999). According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2007/2008 report, Nigeria was classified as one of the countries with low human development index. This implies that the country is still characterized with high level of poverty, insecurity, poor nutrition and sanitation, high illiteracy level, health crisis, dead infrastructure and lack of improved water sources (Agba, Ushie, Basse & Agba 2009). These problems have been attributed to a number of factors including lack of visionary leaders, corruption, poor utilization of human and natural resources (Agba, Ikoh & Agba, 2009). However, the precarious situation the country is undergoing through and the national development goals aforementioned can be achieved through

effective and functional education, This type of education is made possible through teaching and learning. Effective teaching is provided by professional teachers. The teacher is therefore imperative in this enterprise. Incentives must be put in place to enhance teachers' performance; including professionalization of the teaching job for committed national development.

### **Reasons Why Teaching should be Professionalized**

Studies on the relationship between professionalization and teachers' effectiveness; as well as the co-relationship between teaching and national development are quite revealing (Abdal-Haqq, 1992; Kelly, 1995; Dada & Fadokun, 2010; Wikipedia, 2010; Orubite, 2010). The understanding that the Nigerian Federation is an embodiment of social institutions that are manned by trained personnel produced by teachers; and that these institutions function collectively for national development, propelled our quest for the professionalization of teaching. The engineers, medical doctors, accountants, pilots, scientists etc are made by teachers through teaching. It is therefore imperative that entrance into teaching be controlled and regulated by a professional body and this can only be achieved through the professionalization of teaching.

The unethical behavior among teachers (Orubite, 2010), the lack of standardized test scores, the rising tide of violence and teenage pregnancy in public

schools (Kelly, 1995), the poor academic performance of students (Ashibi, 2005; Ikoh, 1995), academic dishonesty among teachers at all levels (Denga & Denga, 1998), the lack of, or the ineffectiveness of regulatory body in the teaching occupation; the poor performance of most teachers and the general institutional weakness in Nigeria are all pointers that teaching should be professionalized.

The low social status ascribed to teaching, the poor remuneration and other motivational incentives in teaching jobs further amplified why the occupation should be professionalized. Ajayi (2007), Yusuf (2010) and Orubite (2010) argued that for an occupation to be professionalized, society must hold such a vocation in high esteem, and that practitioners in such occupation must be highly remunerated and motivated. Verspoor (2006:3) observed that "improvement in the quality of education and school results ultimately takes place in the classroom". Ushie, Agba, Agba and Best (2010) posited that, once a staff is properly motivated and held in high esteem by management, efficiency at the workplace would be guaranteed and this would in turn accelerate overall growth and development of the organization and nation at large. The belief that "professional teachers are trained not only to solve problems in the classroom, but also to initiate proposals for solving national problems" (Emeh, 2004:66) commends the call to professionalize

teaching. Most proposals failed especially in the educational sector because they were not written by professional teachers or better still by persons who are trained by professional teachers (Emeh & Ogaboh, 2010).

### **In-Service Training for Professional Teachers**

There are a number of indicators of professional development. These include in-service training, information and communication technology training, collaboration (that is exchange of staff) and frequency in attending workshops, etc. This implies that practicing teachers must frequently up-date their knowledge in a dynamic world of ours to be relevant in the profession. An obsolete teacher loses touch with realities of life and will gradually lose their status as a professional teacher. In-service training or courses are organized to help a professional teacher to update and maintain their status. In-service training provides the platform for teachers to refresh their knowledge, to improve their competencies and to bring about attitudinal change in their outlook towards educational issues in the country. Despite these advantages, teachers in private and public schools are not given the chance to benefit from in-service training.

In a knowledge and technology driven society like ours, ICT training is also paramount in upgrading the knowledge of the teachers and giving

teaching a professional status. Stakeholders should encourage training and retraining of teachers in ICT. This would enable teachers to update learning material easily and deliver lecture virtually any place. It will also facilitate interaction between the learner and the teacher, thus producing well refined graduates who would in turn contribute meaningfully to national development. Unfortunately most teachers in Nigeria have low knowledge in the use of computer and internet facilities.

Collaboration also enhances professional growth and development. Collaboration here entails working with others for effective teaching and learning. It includes exchange of staff, ideas and development of new approaches to teaching and learning. Collaboration supports professional development in the teaching vocation; it could lead to more thoughtful and effective teaching within the classroom. School administrators/management should encourage exchange of staff for the cross fertilization of ideas and greater coherence of courses and standardized grading system. This practice is very rare in Nigeria, especially in primary and secondary schools; it is only obtainable in some tertiary institutions.

Frequency in attending workshops is also indicator of professional development. Workshops are meant to upgrade teachers knowledge and for

sharing of ideas. The reality in Nigeria is that government hardly organizes workshops for teachers, and where they do, favouritism popularly known as "man-known-man" determines beneficiaries. Consequently, participants who have nothing to do with such workshops are found attending.

### **Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria**

Professionalization is a social and continuous process by which a vocation, job or an occupation transforms itself into a true profession of high standing, integrity and competence. Kelly (1995:3) observes that "professionalization is a sociological process by which an occupation gains professional status and privilege. It is cultural and temporally bound". According to Johnson (1972) quoted in Kelly (1995:3-4), "professionalization is a historically specific process, which some occupations have undergone at a particular time, rather than a process certain occupations may always be expected to undergo because of their essential qualities".

Professionalization involves a number of steps and is determined by society. It is dependent on society. It entails societal influence and authority over an occupational group or trade.

Professionalization of teaching is therefore the function of the society and those involved in the trade. It includes the teacher, school authorities and

managers of the educational system as well as government.

### **Teachers and Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria**

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria was set up by Act 31 of 1993; its motto is "Teaching for Excellence", and charged with the following responsibilities:

- a. Determining persons to be called teachers for the purpose of Act 31 of 1993.
- b. Determining what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by those seeking to become registered as teachers.
- c. Establishment and maintenance of register of teachers and the publication from time to time of the lists of those persons.
- d. Regulation and controlling the teaching profession in all its ramifications.
- e. Classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.
- f. Performing through the council established under Act 31 of 1993, the functions conferred on it by the act.

Other information about Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria are:



1. Benefits of professionalization of teaching in Nigeria:
  - a. The TRCN is the greatest gift the Federal Government, has bequeathed to the Nigerian teachers.
  - b. To all noble and wise vocations the rule is "seek first professionalism and every other derivable will be added unto you".
  - c. Professionalism is the most primary and fundamental needs of any vocation that wishes to deliver qualitative services to society.
  - d. Have its member well respected and remunerated.
  - e. It ensures that only those appropriately trained and inducted perform the job.
  - f. It guarantees that ethics are imbedded.
  - g. Clients get value for their money and efforts.
  - h. Public interest is protected; priority is given to nation building.
  - i. Above all that, the professionals are regarded with dignity and awe. These other professions such as Law, Medicine, Engineering, Pharmacy, realized these secrets early enough and fully exploited them.
  - j. The government has now put into law the fact that only a trained individual can teach,
  - k. It is a thing of joy for both teachers & parents who have been groaning under the weight of poor quality education, examination malpractices, cultism, and sundry vices that are the impact of the invasion of education system by persons neither trained nor genuinely interested in teaching a career.
2. The programmes of TRCN:
  - a. Registration and licensing of qualified teachers.
  - b. Accreditation, monitoring and supervision of the courses and programmes of teacher training institutions of Nigeria
  - c. Organization of internship schemes for fresh education graduates.
  - d. Conduct professional examinations and interview.
  - e. Execution of Mandatory Continuing Professional Education (MCPE).
  - f. Organization of the annual conference of registered teachers of Nigeria.
  - g. Publication of a register of qualified and licensed teachers in Nigeria.
  - h. Enforcement of ethical conduct among teachers and actually persecuting erring ones using the teacher's tribunal,
  - i. Prosecuting in law court all unqualified persons performing the job of teachers in contravention of the TRCN Act.
  - j. Acting as the voice of the voiceless teachers and continually initiating and actualizing public policies and practices that will reposition the teaching profession as first among equals.
3. Who can register with TRCN?
 

Only qualified teachers with the following qualifications NCE, B.ED, M.ED AND PHD.

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4. The benefits of registration with TRCN: It ensures that:
  - a. Only appropriately trained and inducted teachers perform the job.
  - b. Clients get value for money and efforts.
  - c. Public interest is protected.
  - d. Priority is given to nation building and professional growth.
  - e. Job security.
  - f. Ethical rejuvenation in the profession.
  - g. Higher status of teachers in Nigeria.
  - h. Fulfillment of legal professional requirements.
  - i. Halt in brain drain in the teaching profession.
  - j. Rise in educational standard.
  - k. International recognition.
  - l. Tougher standards of entry into the profession.
  - m. Promotion of continuous professional development of teachers.
  - n. Provision of authentic data of teachers in Nigeria.
5. How would professionalization improve the standard quality of education?
  - a. Only professionally trained and inducted teachers will teach and manage the Nigerian schools.
  - b. This will guarantee compliance with professional competence, discipline, tenets, attitude and behavior of teachers.
  - c. It will guarantee high standard in education.
6. Who is a professional teacher?
  - a. He is one trained in the job of teaching.
  - b. Passed all prescribed courses in education.
  - c. Participated in supervised teaching practice
  - d. Has other values and orientation prescribed by the national policy on education.
  - e. Is certified at least with National Certificate in Education (NCE) registered and licensed by the regulatory agency TRCN.
7. Professionalization of teaching promote the image of the teachers:
  - a. The practices of all conventional professions as law, engineering, medicine will be observed and upheld by this.
  - b. Teachers will be remunerated appropriately.
  - c. Teachers will be encouraged to build up their capacity on continual basis through Mandatory Continuing Professional Education (MCPE).
8. The objectives of the Mandatory Continuing Professional Education Programme (MCPE):
  - a. Provides a forum for cross fertilization of ideas and experiences.
  - b. Offers intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas and materials.
  - c. Maintains competence and relevant effectiveness of the teachers in

- economic, technological, political and social environment.
- d. Keeps teachers abreast with the latest innovations in the teaching profession.
  - e. Maintains professional excellence at all times.
  - f. Serves as an on going process of change in order to assist teachers adopt, contribute and participate actively, in the implementation of challenges ahead.
  - g. Enhances teachers' commitment to the profession (Umeano, 2010: 6-10).

### **Conclusion**

Teacher education is an important ingredient of national development. It forms the bases of regenerating education, poverty eradication and self reliance. The professionalization of teaching in Nigeria will influence the shape of society well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, as a professional teacher you must serve certain universal need of the individuals, the school also has a responsibility to reflect cultural, economic and political goals for each society they represent. Moreover, the crisis around the supply and retention of professional teachers is complex; equally so their training. But one thing is clear: there is absolutely no way the "bricks and mortar" institutions of teachers training created in the last century will be adequate for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs (Moon, 2000). To this end, teacher education remains a single major factor for national development. The teacher is centre in this industry, and no tool has been able to replace the teacher yet; this is

because no education system can rise above its teachers. The teacher holds the remedy to the problems ravaging Nigerians. The teacher's professional efficiency matters in these regards. Professionalizing teaching in Nigeria should undoubtedly, therefore assume strategic position in our drive towards national development.

### **Recommendation**

1. The government should bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in the area of teacher education to encourage even national development
2. There should be adequate access to teacher education by both boys and girls and men and women to enable them contribute to global knowledge economy.
3. At all educational levels (located at urban and rural areas) there should be sufficient student/teacher ratios to cement the present disparity.
4. The quality of education is paramount in the education sector. So, trained and qualified teachers should be employed to teach subject areas.
5. Attention should be given to teacher education and their continuing professional development.
6. More researches needs to be conducted on the success and limitations of teacher education programmes, to determine the effectiveness of classroom teachers in our educational industry.

7. Teacher education, training and professional development should be integrated to sustain lifelong learning for teachers and the learners.
  8. Serious priority and attention need to be given to teacher education and professionalization of teaching in Nigeria, in order to facilitate national development.
  9. TRCN should ensure wholistic participation of teachers in the mandatory continuing professional education (MCPE), to enhance efficiency in the Nigerian educational system.
  10. TRCN should carryout credible accreditation, monitoring and supervision of courses and programmes of teacher training institutions in Nigeria.
  11. All registered qualified and licensed teachers in Nigeria should enjoy publication for societal consumption and correction.
  12. TRCN in corroboration with NUT, should act as the voice of the voiceless teachers and continually initiating and enforcing public policies and practices that will reposition the teaching profession as first among equals in Nigeria.
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