

# IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TEACHERS IN NIGERIA

*Dr. M. Aliyu*

## **Abstract**

The history of vocational and technical education in Nigeria may be said to have its beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century following the systematic introduction of Western Education. The concept of the education of technical teachers in Nigeria is to ensure that the teachers are well trained. But one of the intractable problems of technical education in Nigeria, is its inability to retain sufficient number of its products as teachers in the schools. The industrial sector which offers better remuneration competes with the education sector for services of graduates of technical education. The demand of technical teachers has led to the employment of under qualified artisans and, in some cases, pensioned technicians into teaching. Therefore, the writer examined the viable techniques for achieving quality teacher education that would help to produce qualitative technical teachers and students with proper attitudes and behaviour patterns that will in-turn produce positive societal development.

## **Theoretical Foundations of Teacher Education**

Some people hold that teachers are born. Others content that teachers are made. The argument has raged for centuries. One's position in this matter is naturally as a result of one's belief or philosophy. From platonic idealism it is held that truth is absolute, universal and eternal. This postulates that the mind can be disciplined to receive the truth and once this is done, one can function under all conditions. It is this disposition that perhaps gave rise to the concept that teachers are born since the ultimate nature of reality is to be understood in terms of mind, spirit or ideas. On the other hand, the belief that teachers are made springs from the philosophy or pragmatism which claims that truth is not a matter of logic or intellectual coherence, or anything abstract, but lies in the practical consequence of a belief. In this regard the practical consequence is that it makes a difference if teachers are specially educated for their job.

From philosophy, the belief is that knowledge is relative. Therefore, the knowledge of the principles and practices of teaching must be relative. These will consequently vary relative to the subject of instruction, the cliché, the teacher, and the environment of instruction. Because of this relativity of knowledge, it becomes necessary and mandatory to prepare teachers for their specific functions which require specific kind of knowledge and skills, (Ukeje, 1991).

These specific knowledge and skills include: knowledge of child growth and development, knowledge of the learning process, knowledge of curriculum processes and practices, knowledge of teaching strategies and methods, skills in guiding learning, questioning skills, skills in assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes, (Ukeje, 1991).

He observed that since teaching is a complex process, the teacher needs to acquire specialized knowledge which will help not only to know what to teach, how to teach it, when it should be taught and why it should be taught, but the teacher should also be familiar with the following:

- the nature of the human being; and how learning takes place and what motivates behaviour
- how to appraise an individual; that is how to make an educational diagnosis, and how to help persons develop a desirable fashion
- how to work with large and small groups of people of varying ages and background;
- how to help people to be eager to find out, to be curious, inventive and creative
- how to help people become conscious of their values, to examine these values, and to build for themselves values that are more satisfying to them and to the society.

Practice is what give meaning to theory and to assume that teaching is something which almost anyone can do if only the person knows subject matter well is as absurd as to suppose that a physician is qualified to remove an appendix because the physician is well grounded in the subject of anatomy, Brameld in Ukeje, (1991a). Thus, any programme for teacher education, to be effective,

must include an extended period of supervised direct practice for all the teachers. And this, Ukeje concluded should be outside laboratory or simulated practices such as micro - teaching.

### **Techniques of Technical Teacher Education**

The history of technical and vocational education in Nigeria may rightly be said to have its beginning during the first quarter of the twentieth century following the systematic introduction of western type of education development was solely by the Christian missions. Western education introduced in Nigeria by voluntary agencies emphasized on literacy education, (Kaka, 1989). As a consequence, literacy education developed rapidly while technical education which had a slow start, developed less quickly than literacy education.

Technical and vocational education has for long been treated as an insignificant aspect of the country's educational system, (Adeyeri, 1989). For example, all the educational ordinances of 1882, 1887, 1908, and 1916 relegated technological/vocational education to the background.

After 1944, it became clear that Nigeria could not take - off economically without technical manpower, and the need for the development of technical education became paramount, (Oluniyo, 1989). In the ten-year education plan, (1946 - 1955), provision was made for the establishment of technical institutes and trade centres for the training of technicians, craftsmen, and artisans. By 1948, the Yaba Technical Institute and three others in the then Northern, Western and Eastern regions were in operation.

Despite this seemingly rapid change in the development of technical education, the Ashby Commission of 1959 found that there was still an acute shortage of technical manpower and stressed the need for further expansion of technical education.

The Nuffield Foundation report discussed extensively the training of teachers and warned that development of strategies for training of teachers should be embarked upon before the expansion of schools, (Kaka, 1989). The same type of warning Kaka observed was given by the World Bank which designed the educational plans for Nigeria between 1955 and 1960. The mission found that the number of schools far out-number teacher training colleges, and cautioned that the enrolment explosion that gave no consideration to the training of teachers could effect disaster for the educational system, and viewed with seriousness the shortage of teachers.

In keeping with the Ashby commission recommendations, the technical institutes were expanded and new ones built at Auchi, Enugu, Kaduna and Ibadan, (Inwang, 1989). The decade 1970 - 1980 witnessed the greatest expansion so far in technical education in Nigeria. This was also the period when thousands of Nigerians were sent abroad for training as technicians under the "crash programme".

The Federal Government in 1966 decided on having a permanent institution for technical teacher education. Thus the National Technical Teachers College (now Federal College of Education, Technical), Akoka, Lagos was established with the help of UNESCO/UNDP assistance. Also, the Federal Government in 1980 embarked on the TTTP in which hundreds of Nigerians were trained in American universities and Colleges as technical teachers. Other international agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNESCO assisted in technical teacher education and recruitment from external sources have also been explored at one time or another at a high financial cost to the nation.

Research studies such as those conducted by (Igboegwu, 1980; Skinner, 1979), have criticized the Federal Government's overseas programme for the education of technical teachers, (Eze, 1989). Lack of commitments by the institutions for the students peculiar vocational and academic interests, lack of exposure of the students to relevant practical work language handicap and socio-cultural shock were identified as impediments to effective learning. The research reports went further to recommend that it would be most cost-effective to produce at least sub-degree and baccalaureate level technical teachers in Nigerian universities and polytechnics. The concept of the education of technical teachers in Nigerian universities and polytechnics will ensure that the teachers are trained with the machines, tools, equipment processes and in fact in the replica of the work milieu of their eventual employment. It seems the country's institutions of higher learning have awoken to their responsibilities in the area of technical teacher education as many polytechnics and colleges of education, and a few universities now offer technical teacher courses at the NCE, B.Ed and PGTE Levels.

Hitherto, many Nigerian Universities were reluctant to establish **departments** of vocational and technical education, (Nwoke, 1989). In coming to live with this view, Okuro, 1979 cited by Nwoke blamed this attitude on Nigeria's colonial education experience which portrayed vocational technical education as something outside the domain of universities.

Technical/vocational teachers could be prepared formally or informally, (Olaitan, 1987). In the informal methods, individuals with special traits are persuaded to follow certain occupations and train under qualified masters. This type of training is synonymous with the apprenticeship system. The individual learns the necessary skills of the occupation as well as how to impart it to others. In the formal system, the decision of becoming a teacher is made by the individual after which he/she registers in a school for the education of teachers. What is required of the trainee is aptitude and interest in a given trade.

### **Quality and Quantity of Technical Teachers**

Of all the educational problems that beset African countries today, none is as persistent or as compelling as that relating to the training of a competent teacher, (Fafunwa, 1980). The demands for more and better institutions in all parts of the continent, and the desirability of training in vocational and technical skills, and indeed the over-all problem of preparing the future citizens to be fully oriented to their environment cannot be effectively accomplished without the guidance of competent teachers. (Usman 1993).

Fafunwa asserted that neither can the demand for trained manpower be adequately met, for the success or failure of all of the above stated goals depends entirely on the pattern, the content and the objectives of teacher education programmes.

Towe, (1989:18) opined that, one of the most important problem facing technical education generally is the shortage of qualified teachers in the required number. The shortage may not be unconnected with the fact that:

although there is a high demand for this caliber of manpower, very little has been done to produce them in large numbers and;  
the few that are produced have so much opportunities that they invariably find greener pastures where ever they want to be at anytime in industry or in education.

In order to meet the demand to have adequate number of technical teachers for the institutions, a massive staff development programme is necessary, to up-grade and update teachers in the system and to mount serious recruitment drive.

It's difficult to get the desired number of qualified technical teachers for the secondary schools; it is even more difficult to get enough qualified technical teacher educators (Ogalanga, 1991). Poor conditions of service is partly responsible for the high turnover rate in this area. Eze, in Uyanga (1986), observed that it is difficult to set professional technical teachers because technical teachers who possess the good experience usually prefer production work in industry or self-employment rather than teaching. Eze (1989), said by saying if technical education is really the key that will open the door to socio-economic and techno-industrial development in Nigeria; then the entire effort in producing the technical teachers has to be properly addressed,

Lees, (1985), in his study of vocational teacher competence in relations to teacher preparation found significant relationship between the amount of competency-based teacher education and teacher competence. It was found that teachers experiencing more competency-based teacher education than traditional competency based teacher education. Lees concluded that, the rejection of two null hypotheses combined with the significant inverse relationship between traditional teacher education and teacher competence served as basis for suggesting that competency - based teacher education may be more effective in preparing competent teachers than the traditional approach.

Aina (1991), writing on teacher training as a strategy for technical development posited amongst others that the quality of technical and vocational education depends upon the teachers. The technical teacher occupies a most important place in modern society; he is the link between industrial society and the educational system.

Fafunwa in Aina (1991), asserted that the training and procurement of teachers must precede all other considerations; the development of any educational level presupposes the availability of teachers in sufficient numbers. Widespread curriculum reforms in schools to introduce technical

education will be useless; unless qualified technical teachers are prepared. The preparation of the technical teacher is the key to any educational reform.

The shortage of qualified and well trained technical teachers has been brought up by the high numbers of pupils at secondary school level joining technical colleges and the introduction of technical subjects as part of the curriculum of secondary schools (Aina, 1991). This demand of technical teachers has led to the employment of under qualified artisans and in some cases pensioned technicians into teaching. Aina also identified the high salaries paid by industry as a factor that has attracted many technical teachers to seek employment in industry.

### **Public Image of Technical Education and Teachers**

The honour, fame, respect or esteem associated with an occupation greatly affect the number of people who choose a given occupation, (Usman, 1993). Prestige is usually derived from people's attitudes to or value attached to an event. In Nigeria, work is valued as an opportunity to make money and work is satisfying to the extent that those who are engaged in it make money.

One of the intractable problems of technical education in Nigeria is its inability to retain sufficient number of its products as teachers in the educational system (Auta, 1987). The industrial sector which offers better remuneration competes with the education sector for services of graduates with the city and Guilds and (WAEC) technical certificates. Auta suggested that the remuneration of technical teachers and condition of service should be improved to minimize their flight to greener pastures.

Supporting this is Kanu, (1987), who that there must be an ail out effort on the part of the government to motivate and induce the needed technical teachers by placing them on salaries comparable to those of their colleagues in business or industry.

Re-echoing the problems that affect the development of technical education, Sesay (1989), listed among others the supply of technical teachers and the absorption of the products of technical schools to other sectors of the economy. Other problems listed were the non-provision of special incentives to attract qualified personnel to teaching. Sesay confirmed that, technical education which is so vital to technological development had for too long not been given due emphasis. Technical education is regarded by Africans as second class to literacy education which prepared its clientele for white-colour jobs that attract better salaries and higher prestige.

In lamenting the neglect of technical education, Okafor (1988), stated that:

For too long, we produced an army of clerks and pen - pushers and fewer technicians and craftsmen, yet it is an army of artisans, engineers, and the like that can in the long-run change the face of Nigeria industrially and economically. He said that: A nation that scorns excellence in plumbing because it is an humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will neither have good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither will its pipes and theories hold water.

The world confederation of the organization of the teaching profession in a survey cited by Fafunwa (1980), reported that the status of the teaching profession in Africa and by inference Nigeria is low. The teacher often does not get a salary which keeps him contented or enables him to maintain a standard of life comparable to that of others having the same qualification.

Thompson (1988), decried situations in which technical teachers are disadvantaged in respect of promotional prospects. Opportunities for promotions are restricted by the failure of those responsible to recognize the value of technical subjects, consequently headship of technical secondary schools and other senior posts in the administration may not be offered to technically qualified staff.

A casual observation reveals that the number of persons from certain geographical area of the country in professions like engineering, law, medicine, accountancy and technical education is precipitously low, (Anegebe, 1991). The basic philosophy of life held by a society serves to influence the vocational pursuits of the people. If there is to occur an even spread of development in the country, those behaviour patterns and outlook to life which do not foster technological development have to be detected early and modified.

## **Some Recommendations that would Improve the Quality of Vocational and Technical Teachers in Nigeria**

1. Competence in the subject matter. This may require teachers to enhance their skills with current trends in production and manufacturing processes.
2. Teaching should be focused towards providing the students with necessary skills as specified in training objectives.
3. Teachers may need to update their knowledge in competency-based education.
4. Teaching should shift from teaching for knowledge to teaching for application.

## **Conclusion**

Educational planners must come to terms with socio-cultural realities that make the major groups within the nation unique. Unless the norms and values of those admitted into teacher preparation programmes are given consideration a blind devotion to, and implementation of educational philosophies that have produced results in a different culture will yield transient results. Nicholas (1976) introduced a set of philosophical constructs which provide a framework for understanding the difference between people with respect to their behaviour and thought processes. The model has been further developed by Anagbe, (1991:4) to characterize the three dominant Nigerian tribes. He summarized the dispositions and patterns of behaviour of the three major tribal groupings as:

A group believes in fate, strict hierarchical structure, encourages dependence, and maintenance of status quo. Directly opposed to this is another major tribe which considers dependence a vice, believes hard work is a mark of manhood, and encourages striving for excellence through conflict and competition. Within this group, authority structure is not rigid: the third group believes hard work is the cure for poverty pleasure should be sought provided the norms of the society are not violated, and that respect for old age is a virtue.

Technical teacher education institutions admit students from these heterogeneous backgrounds. Shaping learners from this three distinct group into Nigerian citizens who are committed to the common cause of the larger Nigerian family is not a trivial task.

Quality teacher education programmes will help to produce qualitative teachers with proper attitudes and behaviour patterns and these will in turn hopefully produce good students with the right attitudes, proper behaviour patterns, efficient commitment and motivation to change the society for the better. Teachers are viewed as custodians of knowledge who are expected to transmit flawlessly the accumulated wisdom of the ages.

## **References**

- Adeyeri, J.B. (1999). Structure, content, objectives and relevance of technical and vocational training in polytechnics. Paper presented at the national seminar on technical and vocational education in Nigeria, held at the National board for technical education Kaduna.
- Aina, O. (1991). Technical and vocational teacher training as a strategy for technical development. The Nigerian Teacher National Commission of Colleges of Education, Kaduna.
- Anegbe, C.I. (1991). Philosophy for technical teacher preparation: New perspectives. Paper presented at the seminar held at the university of Jos.
- Auta, I.S. (1989). Technical teachers for technical colleges from 1980 to 2000. A paper presented at the workshop on the rules of technical colleges in Nigeria educational scene held at the National Board for Technical Education Kaduna.
- Eze, T.I. (1989). Technical teacher shortage on the implementation of the national policy on education: Theoretical and empirical analysis. Nigeria Education Research Association, Benin City,
- Igboegwu, I. (1980), Skinner B.F. (1979). *About behaviorism*. New York: Knoff.

- Inwang, I.I (1988). History and development of technical and vocational education training in Nigeria. Paper presented at the national seminar on technical and vocational education training in Nigeria held at NBTE Kaduna.
- Kanu, I. (1987). The concept of teaching and learning in Uguig women, A.F. and Ogbinaka, K. (eds) *Philosophy and education*. Lagos: Obaroh and Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd.
- Kaka, H.J. (1989). Constraints in the production of technical and vocational teachers for technical and vocational education in Nigeria. Paper presented at the riding seminar on technical and vocational education in Nigeria held at NBTE, Kaduna.
- Less, R.E. (1985). Vocational teacher competence as it relates to teacher preparation, self-actualization and educated demographic variables. Doctoral dissertation, temple university 1984, dissertation abstract international 47(5) 169A.
- Maiyaki, J.Y (1987). Teaching staff requirement for Nigeria technical colleges in the 1980s and beyond. Paper presented at the national workshop on the roles technical education in the Nigeria education scene held at NBTE Kaduna.
- Nicholas, E.J. (1976). The philosophical aspects of cultural difference. Paper presented to the psychiatrists association seminar held at Ibadan.
- Olaitan, S.O. (1987). The training and development of technology/technical teachers for Nigeria technical institutions: Problems and issues. Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NBTE Kaduna.
- Oloniyo, S.B. (1989). The economics of technical education in Nigeria. An analysis of some key issues, paper presented at the seminar on technical and vocational education in Nigeria. NBTE Kaduna.
- Okafor, C.F. (1988). *Nigerian teacher education. A search for new direction*. Enugu. Fourth Dimension Pub. Co. Ltd.
- Sesay, A. (1989). Local tradesman: A viable factor in the Implementation of the National Policy on Education. *Nigerian Journal of Technical Education*. 6 (land 2). 30 - 40.
- Sofacohan, J.A.O, (1989). The implementation and constraints of technical and vocational education: component of the national policy on education and vocational education and training in Nigeria held at NBTE Kaduna.
- Thompson, A.R. (1988). Synthesis report: Training for teachers of technical subjects in secondary schools in developing countries. United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration. United Kingdom.
- Towe, P.E.G. (1989). Present instructional capabilities of technical and technological institutions, their constraints, shortfall, and strategies for future development presented at NBTE Kaduna.
- Usman, B. (1993). Strategies for Innovation in Technical Teacher Education, in the Eleventh Northern States of Nigeria. Unpublished M. Ed/Ph.D (Vol. Ed.) Thesis. Department of Vocational Teacher Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Ukeje, B.O. (1991). Philosophy of teacher education. Keynote address presented at the national commission for colleges of education organized at the University of Jos.