
Teacher Education in Nigeria; Challenges and Way Forward in the Global Community

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Abstract

The study investigated teacher education in Nigeria; challenges and way forward in the global community. Teacher education is a tool required by teachers to acquire the requisite professional teaching skills necessary to excel in a dynamic global community. The paper x-rayed the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria as well as the way forward. Based on the laudable emphasis on teacher education, the study recommends among others that teacher education in Nigeria should conform to international standards; this can be achieved through the establishment of linkage programmes between Nigerian teacher education institutions, centres and faculties with top ranking foreign universities and bodies.

Introduction

The success of an educational enterprise particularly in terms of quality depends to a large extent, on the regular supply of qualified teachers. In the National Policy on Education, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) also asserted that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological

progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. The training and production of the manpower required for the attainment of national objectives should be framed on the quality and quantity of teachers. Fafunwa (1974) cited by Dienye (2011) argued that teacher education should be basically related to every phase of development in Nigeria, for wherever one turns, be it economic, political or social spheres of activities, one is faced with the over-reoccurring problem of trained manpower needs but no adequate training can take place without competent teachers to handle the programme.

It is the education system that produces the personnel that drives the various facets of national life; as was stated by the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS, 2004) “the goals of wealth creation, employment generation, poverty reduction and value reorientation can be effectively pursued, attained and sustained only through an efficient, relevant and functional system”. However, it is noteworthy to point out that no matter how

well designed or how well intended the visions of an education system are, they can only be actualized by the presence of a well equipped, visionary, well trained, efficiently committed and qualified teachers.

Teacher Education

The key personnel in the institutions who play an important role to bring about positive transformations in students are teachers. As stated by NCTE (1998) in Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education, —The teacher is the most important element in any educational program, it is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage. This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secured. Dienne (2011) stated that the teacher is the prime player in the education of students at every level, the teacher can be described as the life wire of the education system at all levels. The teacher can only deliver quality education to the students only if he is professionally viable. It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation. The importance of competent teachers to the nation's school system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education.

Teacher education has been variously defined; The National Council for Teacher

Education as cited by Jekayinfa (n.d.) defined teacher education as a programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. Osuji (2009) defined teacher education as professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the need of the society at any point in time. It is also the training and education before service and during the service which is training on the job. It is a process of developing skilled teaching manpower which will enhance the provision of good and relevant education to learners by teachers at whatever level of the education system they operate. More so, Dienne (2011) stressed that teacher education occupies a centre stage in the whole education enterprise. It is a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education both in the formal and informal sub-systems. It is responsible for the production of academically and professionally competent teachers who can translate theories of teaching into practical teaching in the classroom. As pointed out by UNESCO (2001), there is the need for well qualified and competent teachers who would be able to teach more than one million children that are still out of school. Teacher education is crucial to the realization of the

vision 2020 target of achieving education for all.

Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teacher Education = Teaching Skills + Pedagogical theory + Professional skills.

Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.

Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage.

Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills. An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would serve to create the right knowledge,

attitude and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education was started in Nigeria by the missionaries albeit in a crude manner when pupil teachers were trained as catechists. While missionaries made efforts to train teachers and preachers in Eastern and Western Nigeria, teacher training in Northern Nigeria was started by the colonial government in Nassarawa under the leadership of Harnns Vischer who was the then Director of Education in Northern Nigeria. Teacher training before and during the colonial period can be described as very deficient and shallow. Recognizing the importance of teacher education to the development of the nation, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) clearly stated the goals of teacher education in section 71 (a-e) that teacher education shall:

- Produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all level of our education system
- Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers
- Help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations
- Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The policy further stated that all teachers shall be professionally trained. Teacher

education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their duties. Specified programmes in the following institutions will ensure the implementation of the goals of teacher education if they meet the required minimum standards:

- a) Colleges of Education
- b) Faculties of Education
- c) Institutes of Education
- d) National Teachers' Institute (NTI)
- e) Schools of Education in the Polytechnics

It is expected that teacher education shall be continuously expanded both at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and degree levels to cater for the requirements of technical, business and special education.

In order to legalize the professional status of teaching in Nigeria, government set up the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) for the purpose of controlling and regulating teaching in Nigeria. The council was to give unqualified teachers the period to get qualified through some form of teacher education. It also required newly qualified teachers to go through periods of internship. Holders of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) were to serve two years of internship while holders of the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degrees serve for a period of one year.

Teacher education in Nigeria is supposed to improve at both the primary and secondary school levels looking at the national policy guidelines. Agencies of government responsible for policy implementation are expected to ensure provision of quality

teacher education by ensuring that only academically and professionally qualified persons are appointed as teachers and head teachers. They are also expected to regulate in-service training programmes for both teachers and head teachers. In line with the recognition of the national policy on education which stated that "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers" (Dienye, 2011).

More so, Dienye emphasized that the aims of teacher education have been broadened to keep pace with the scientific and technological revolution. The content of teacher education programmes has been adapted to the changing needs of society. There is an increase in the number of teachers being trained to cope with the population increase and universal basic education. Teacher education curriculum has been enlarged, now including new subjects like Peace and Security Education, Computer Education, Environmental education, and HIV/AIDS issues. Education against contemporary issues that destabilize society like breakdown of family values, drug abuse, sexual harassment, cultism and corruption are incorporated in Nigerian teacher education.

Challenges of Nigerian Teacher Education

Teacher education in Nigeria is currently faced with many challenges as discussed by Dienye (2011);

One major challenge of teacher education in Nigeria has been that of quality control in teacher education institutions. Maintaining the required standards to ensure that quality

education is given to teachers has not been completely attainable. Some government agencies are responsible for regulating teacher education programmes include the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) which coordinates and regulates colleges of education ensuring that the number of qualified lecturers and the required infrastructure for effective running of the institutions are available. The Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) is the body responsible for accrediting university programmes in the faculties and institutes of education in the universities. The National Teachers Institute (NTI) is the body responsible for pre-service and in-service training programmes, teachers who wish to get National Certificate of Education (NCE) and most recently Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is responsible for maintaining teachers register and code of conduct for teachers.

Even though these bodies have been given the responsibility to monitor and maintain standards in the various schools responsible for providing teacher education, they have not been doing their jobs the way they should. Inspections are not being properly done. Inspections are flossed over after inducements by heads of education institutions to get their programmes accredited. The outreach programmes of the NTI are poorly monitored, inexperienced officers are put in charge of their outreach centres scattered all over the country, especially in the rural areas. Poor quality

lectures are given to these students. A lot of examination malpractices take place in these centres unchecked. Even the TRCN has not been able to stop non educationists from teaching. The inability of these regulatory agencies of government to perform their duties effectively is inimical to the growth of teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher education in Nigeria is bedeviled with poor quality candidates. Stakeholders in the education system have expressed concerns about the poor quality of education graduates from most teacher training institutions and universities. It is common knowledge that most candidates who opt to train as teachers in the faculties of education in the universities and colleges of education do so reluctantly. Most candidates see teacher education as the last option when they fail to secure admission into other courses of their choice. The result is that such students do not commit their time to the programme but want to get the degrees to look for greener pastures. Besides, admitting poor students into education programmes also affects the final output. Poor quality candidates will make poor quality teachers. Undeserving candidates who indulge in examination malpractices to gain admission may not be amenable to learning because they are ill prepared for rigorous academic work. The result is poor quality teachers.

Teacher education suffers from poor enrolment. The poor condition of service over the years has made teaching very unattractive to the best brains in the country.

There is nothing to entice and retain the best brains in the profession. The low social status of teaching in Nigeria has made it very unattractive to younger ones. The problem of attrition in the teaching profession is a huge challenge to teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher education in Nigeria suffers from gender imbalance; teaching is generally seen as a female dominated profession, especially at the primary and secondary school levels. It is alarmingly becoming so, even at the tertiary level. A lot of talent and resource is lost due to reluctance of males to enroll in teacher education programmes. Ibidapo (2007) pointed out the relationship between loud motivation of teachers and brain drain in the education sector; he noted that cases of absenteeism, apathy and lack of commitment in school are results of poor conditions of service. The challenge of globalization is an impediment to Nigerian teacher education; when the world is driven by information and communication technology (ICT), most institutions that provide teacher education do not have the technology and personnel to train teachers who can teach students using the latest cutting edge gadgets of modern science and technology. Training and retraining of teachers to cope with the dynamic trend in education through acquisition of competency in multimedia which will help facilitate interactive communication among individuals. ICT enables teachers to use the web and this process expands the teachers' horizon as it keeps them abreast of new trends in education. The absence of ICT

facilities in most teacher training institution has a negative impact on the quality of both the teacher education and education in general.

The Nigerian education has always experienced very poor funding. According to Briggs (2010), the federal government has never been able to get to the 26% budgetary allocation stipulated by UNESCO to education the highest being 6.4% of the budgetary allocation to the education sector. The result is an education sector bedeviled with industrial actions due to non provision of the infrastructure required to provide quality education in teacher training institutions. Lifelong teacher education model is almost non-existent in Nigerian teacher education programmes. There is the need for lifelong education for teachers. This includes vertical integration- education throughout life. Teacher education should include inculcating in the teachers the attitude of continuous learning. Fadina (2004) emphasized the need for more in-service and on the job training to help raise the quality of teachers in Nigeria. In the same vein Olude (2004) saw in-service training as a lifelong education process for the improvement of teacher education in Nigeria. In-service training for teachers is not given the attention it deserves because teachers do not get sponsorship.

Government has always paid lip-service for implementation of policies that will promote the quality of teacher education in Nigeria as stipulated in the national policy. Teacher education in Nigeria also suffers from the

problem of poorly trained teachers due to the problem of examination malpractice. Student teachers who cheat their way through training programmes will naturally get into the system as half-baked and poor quality teachers. This trend has continued to ruin the Nigerian Teacher education progress in the globalized world.

The way forward for Teacher Education in Nigeria

For Nigeria to remain relevant in the comity of nations, the quality of its education must be seen to be at the same level as the developed nations, teacher education at all levels must be geared towards producing a crop of well motivated teachers to participate in the developmental revolution which is sweeping through Nigeria in recent times. Without well trained teachers to help educate the masses, the various economic reforms (NEEDS, SEEDS, LEEDS, and NAPEP), and even other socio-political and economic reforms will not make any impact in the developmental process. An improvement on the quality of teacher education will ensure that teachers are equipped with the specialized knowledge and capability to achieve the nation's educational goals which is an efficient, relevant and functional education system.

Conclusion

The quality of education of any nation depends on the quality of its teachers; efforts should be made by government to employ all modern methods available in teacher education to produce qualified teachers. This will ensure a high quality education system

which will compete positively in the global community.

Recommendations

To enhance quality of teacher education in Nigeria, the study recommends the following;

- i. teacher education programmes should be subjected to proper supervision by the appropriate bodies to ensure the achievement of goals in line with the standard benchmark for achievement of quality teacher education to equip teachers in the delivery of cutting-edge knowledge required for survival in globalized world
- ii. the period of students' teaching practice should be extended to enhance professional preparation of the teachers. Also, the possibility of a probation system of prospective teachers should be considered on its own merits for the production of competent teachers.
- iii. government should award scholarship to student teachers as incentive. Exceptional students with cumulative grade points of 4.5 and above should be encouraged by awarding them free university education so long as their grades do not drop.
- iv. The government and curriculum planners should ensure that the teacher trainers in our teacher education institutes are themselves professionals. Also, the professionals

in teacher education should regularly organize seminars and workshops to update teachers on the new methods in teaching at various school levels and

- v. the government should increase the funding of the teacher education institutions by providing modern facilities especially in the area of ICT should be made available by the government to enhance the quality of teacher education in Nigeria at various school levels

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