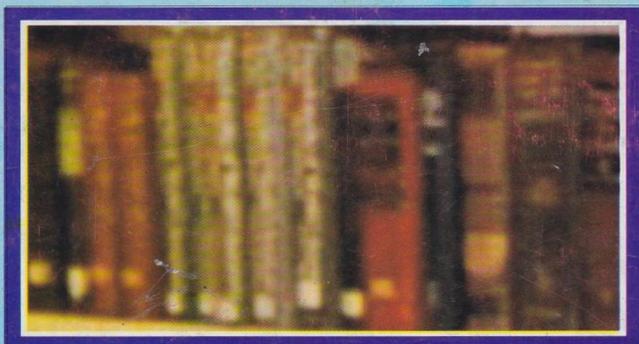


MULTI DISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Volume 15 No. 1, May, 2016

ISSN: 2141-3215



TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

This paper reviews the important characters teachers, as products of higher education play in the school system. The paper establishes a bond between quality teacher education and national development. Critical challenges to teacher education programmes and the teaching profession in Nigeria are identified to include non- professionalization of teaching; insufficient knowledge and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT); politicizing recruitment into teaching; colonised mindsets and culture sensitive pedagogy; teacher induction; poor society perception of teacher education and moral or values education. Recommendations are made to address the challenges.

Key words: Teacher education, Training and Qualitative Education, Professionalisation.

Education can be regarded as the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potential and all kinds of rights and powers. The increasing awareness of the importance of education to the upliftment of the individual and societal standards has

awakened in people and nations a conscious effort at devoting their meager resources to acquiring qualitative education (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012). The success of an educational enterprise particularly, in terms of quality, depends to a very large extent, on the regular supply of teachers in adequate quantity and quality. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) asserts that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self – sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement. However, what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available in the system. According to Ibukun (2004), the quality of human resources in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of the effectiveness of educational programmes.

In order to achieve any socio-political, economic and scientific development in a country, there is the dire need for qualified teachers who are equipped with the desired knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, and who are empowered to perform their tasks professionally. The National Policy on Education gave credence to this, when it asserted that, no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Hence, there is the need to always appraise the nation's system of teacher education with a view to ensuring adequate supply of quality of teachers, in the right mix, to man the various levels of the educational system in the country. This paper therefore, examines the history of teacher education in Nigeria, the challenges of teacher education and the ways of ascertaining the good prospects of teacher education in Nigeria.

Teacher Education refers to 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 need of a given society at any point in time. Teacher education in Nigeria is subsumed under tertiary education. Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) noted that effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers. The purpose teacher education is to produce well qualified professional teachers that can adjust to the changing needs of the students and developmental prospect of the modern society.

Teacher education is the heartbeat of manpower development and training for prudent use and sustenance of resources in nation building. Teacher education, being extricably linked with general education and social goals, is constantly caught up in the series of dilemma derivable from educational expansion, political, technological development, social change as well as issues inherent in teacher education curricula itself. This paper examines the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria which include: Non professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria; Insufficient Knowledge and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT); Recruitment into Teacher Education Programme; Dismantling Colonised Mindsets and Culture Sensitive Pedagogy; Teacher

Induction; Poor Society Perception of Teacher Education and Moral or Values Education.

Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria. Here are some of the outstanding challenges in teacher education in Nigeria:

Non-professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria

A profession is an occupation which renders services useful for the survival of individuals and the society, these valuable services are vital to survival and it is knowledge base, problem solving, rare, managerial and full of expertise. Akindiyo (2014) defined a profession as a service occupation, which applies a systematic body of knowledge to problems that are of great relevance to the analysis towards a resolution of profession rigidly adhere to professional code of ethics which are professions laid down rules, values, norms and standards to ensure control in the mode of entry into the occupation. Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) lamented that many teachers in Nigeria have not measured up to the minimum international standard. This is because a large number of untrained and half-baked personnel are still retained in the system, leading to a scenario in which career in teaching is not yet professionalized.

As noted by Ciwar (2001), professionals in Pharmacy, Medicine, Engineering, Law, Architecture, and others which are far younger than the teaching profession, enjoy the epitome and symbol of genuine professionalism. They proudly wear their identities and in whatever job they find themselves, they still prefer to be identified by their respective professions (Yusuf, 2011). The major challenges facing the professionalisation of the teaching profession include the practice of training would-be teachers by mushroom/satellite campuses; introduction of part-time programmes to the would-be teachers; recruitment of uncertified and non-qualified teachers to teach in the schools among others (Etuk and Uya, 2015).

Now, one needs to ponder why do we not have other professions like Pharmacy, Medicine, Engineering, Law and so on train their practitioners in mushroom/ satellite campuses and part-time programmes? Why not recruit teachers as medical experts or legal advisers? Why is teaching a place for all? What are the programmes of TRCN with respect to requirements for recognition, rights and privileges, legal standing and the regulatory order? It is not far from the truth that the teaching profession in Nigerian lacks effective ethical code of conduct. The later exists only in print; is not enforced and so does not exist in the consciousness of teachers (Etuk and Uya, 2015). Teaching as a profession in Nigeria does not emphasis or implement the pre-conditions that practitioners must first be registered and a certificate of registration obtained as a license to practice; it does not distinguish between levels of qualification either in college certificates or in experience and excellence in practice as do other professions; and the profession is yet to inculcate in members the trait of exerting

service above self and insistence on membership registrar (Yusuf, 2011; Abimola, 2005).

Insufficient Knowledge and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Another major challenge to teacher education in Nigeria is that of insufficient knowledge and use of ICT in a globalizing world. The knowledge, and use of computer technology as well as the internet is necessary for all teachers to guarantee the relevance of the system and its products. According to Osokoya (2012), for our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times.

Through ICT, individual learners can seek explanation, compare experiences, investigate problems, reflect, reason and learn many concepts in the school curriculum. In other words, through ICT, learners would learn how to learn and think about what they learn and so develop the spirit of self-reliance and confidence (Etuk and Uya, 2015). According to Abolade and Yusuf (2005), general computer literacy (operating system, word processing, spreadsheet, database, and telecommunication) is not sufficient to prepare teachers to use technology in their classrooms. What is needed is professional literacy – a basic understanding of how computer and related technology can be used in education, as well as specific skills for integrating technology into curriculum at all levels (Willis, 2011).

Practicing and would be teachers need professional development programme for successful application of ICTs in instruction. Research findings have indicated that the extent to which teachers integrate ICTs in the teaching/learning process is related to the teachers' knowledge and competence. That is, teachers' ability and willingness to integrate ICTs into their teaching greatly depends on their professional training and competency they received (Pearson, 2008; Selinger & Austin, 2013). According to Uya (2011), ICT competency and compliance among teachers and would be teachers in some parts of Nigeria is low. This could be as a result of so many factors such as lack of technically experienced teachers, limited ICT facilities and infrastructure, inadequate course content for ICT training, lack of clear direction in the Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology (NNPIT) on teacher education, lack of leadership by professional organisations and the problem of electricity.

Recruitment into Teacher Education Programme

In the Nigerian tertiary institutions, those recruited into teacher education programmes are generally of poor quality (Udofot, 2005). A trend has been evolving to 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 and architecture (Adindiyo, 2014). Also, the low quality of teachers produced through in-service training by NTI is a serious challenge to teacher education

in the country. Some Nigeria scholars gave noted that most of the teachers upgraded to teachers' grade 11 by NTI were very deficient not only in the academic subjects they teach, but also in techniques of teaching (Obanya, 2008).

Another challenge faced by Nigerian education systems is the recruitment of teachers in secondary schools without the requisite teacher training qualification, although they may have had a degree. This situation is akin to the erroneous expectation that a driver, while qualified to drive a car, would also be able to repair the car when it breaks down without the relevant knowledge and skills to do so. This has had serious policy and pedagogical implications and has impacted negatively on the quality of student learning.

A sensitive issue that crippled the development of education is the manner and the why the politician influence the recruitment exercise of teachers. Many people today are after securing job for their children just to have meal ticket not bothering whether their wards qualified or not. This has contributed to recruitment of many unqualified teachers in our schools.

Dismantling Colonised Mindsets and Culture Sensitive Pedagogy

At the heart of any educational system are teachers and students engaging in the teaching and learning processes. The preparation of teachers, both pre-service and in-service, is vitally important if Nigerian educational systems are to produce quality learning outcomes and if students are to attain an appropriate standard of success, however that might be defined. Given their colonial past, a great challenge facing these countries today is that they have inherited all the ideological and physical structures, including the fact that instruction continues to be in the colonial language. Dismantling these structures or even finding alternatives has been difficult given that these countries have not experienced anything different.

What this has also meant is that teacher education systems in Nigeria have been modelled on western systems, thus perpetuating the cycle of 'copycatting' what happens in metropolitan countries. Curricula, pedagogical approaches, assessment methods continue to be derived from the west, to the extent that western theories of learning and teaching, psychology and assessment permeate teacher education institutions in Nigeria. Vygotsky, Piaget, Bruner, Maslow and Gardner continue to be served on a silver platter to student teachers in Nigeria. Similarly, practicum or teaching practice models are imported from another context. The major challenge is the inability to implement what has been modelled appropriately. The modelled practices are watered down; with lack of corresponding teaching aids; lack of trained personnel; inappropriate evaluation and lack of Culture sensitivity.

Also meant is that teacher education institutions and schools having not valued indigenous epistemologies or the culture and value systems of Nigerian children. This

has contributed in significant ways to schools being perceived as an alien and unfriendly place, with seemingly irrelevant content and practices that marginalised students and led to underachievement, which was narrowly defined as failing local and national examinations. The need for a culture sensitive pedagogy in teacher education programmes is crucial.

Teacher Induction

Another area of great concern is the need to have newly trained; inexperienced teachers undergo an intensive induction programme when they join their first school. There is no national policy on new teacher induction in our countries, Nigeria and this situation needs rectifying. What needs to be remembered is that ultimately, it is the students who will suffer the consequences of inadequate support for teachers starting out on their teaching careers.

Induction is the support and guidance provided to newly recruited teachers in the early stages of their careers. Induction encompasses orientation to the workplace, socialization, mentoring and guidance before the beginning of teacher practice (Porter, 2005; Smith 2007). In Nigeria, not much emphasis is placed on induction of new teachers. Many a times newly recruited teachers are deployed into the field without exposure to an induction programme. Thus, teachers would go into their new job without adequate psychological preparation (Etuk and Uya, 2015).

Poor Society Perception of Teacher Education

Another formidable problem of teacher education in Nigeria today is the lack of interest on the part of the secondary school leavers in the teaching profession, because of the poor image associated with the status of teachers in the society. According to Durosaro (2006), the low status accorded to teachers in the country, does not make students enroll and be trained as teachers. The few who enroll do so because they have no choice. Ibukun (2004) lamented that many brilliant individuals are not willing to take up teaching as a profession. According to the author, this should not have been so if teaching is upgraded to a position of respect in the Nigerian society. It appears that the present system of education in Nigeria promotes the reservation of intellectually and financially deficient students for the teaching career. How then can third class brains be expected to effectively teach first class brains?

Moral or Values Education

Another serious issue facing Nigeria teacher education, and therefore schools, lies in the area of values education. The issue of making moral and ethical decisions is significant in these new times of rapid social, cultural, political, economic and technological change. Student teachers and classroom students will need to be guided into making sound moral and ethical choices in everything they do, whether inside or outside the classroom. While the family, as the basic social unit of society and the church, can play a significant role in this area, their impact is neutralised by the

changing dynamics brought about by urbanisation, globalisation, changing economic structures including high levels of poverty and the like. It is therefore imperative that schools also take the lead in 'teaching' and 'practising' sound moral values. The building of character through moral education should be strongly emphasised in school organisation and curriculum so that upright, law-abiding citizens are produced who can live lives of moral significance.

Another critical area in education today is indiscipline; this is manifested in examination malpractices, secret cult menace, corruption etc. Crises in our schools today has led to "brain-drain", students of today are no longer interested in academic excellence but when would I pass out from the schools.

Way Forward/Recommendations

1. Government has to pursue vigorously the policy guiding professionalization of teaching by making teacher education/training mandatory for all teachers. Also, adequate teacher education and training with adequate provision of resources with re-introducing of teacher colleges.
2. While recruiting student-teachers into teacher education programmes, their intellectual levels must be taken into consideration. It is the responsibility of teaching profession to recruit people with sufficient academic and professional skills to enable them cope with the difficulties of teaching. Teacher educators must recruit intellectually talented individuals who should be able to apply theory and engage in theoretical analysis.
3. There is need to practically integrate ICT into teacher education curricula programme so as to provide every student-teacher the opportunity to be updated on the use of ICT facilities. This will facilitate communication among teachers. Apart from trading and retraining of teachers, facilities must be provided by government to enable teachers and their students' access to be uninterrupted so that the world gradually will become a global village.
4. For teacher education to get its pride of place in this democratic dispensation there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The profession must be recognized by the government, as well as, the public to be able to attract young ones into the profession.
5. More time should be provided for practical work before students are certified as teachers. There is the need to review upward the twelve weeks of internship for education students in the university. To provide sound teacher education in future, the present curriculum need to be reviewed so as to provide more time for students in the practical aspect of teaching before certificates are awarded to them as qualified teachers.
6. Teachers are advised to show high level of dedication and commitment to their job. They should demonstrate good sense of responsibility in carrying out their duties. Regardless of the magnitude of societal negative attitude to teachers, they must not

deviate from their traditional role of modelling and nation building. Hence, they must stick to the ethics of the profession irrespective of the whims and caprices.

7. Induction models for the new teachers should be created and implemented by employers of teachers. School head teachers or principals should ensure that new teachers are mandatorily mentored based on subject areas and for a considerable length of time to allow mentors observe, interact with and guide new entrants into the teaching career.
8. It is imperative that ministries of education devise strategies whereby their teachers would be continually upgraded on curriculum, pedagogical and assessment areas in their respective fields. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged not only to become lifelong learners but to also attempt to upgrade their qualifications to the highest possible level.

Conclusion

For the Nigeria education system to attain the highest quality desired, the teachers who constitute the intellectual resource pool and the critical operator of the system must be effectively and efficiently trained. Also, if Nigeria must re-engineer her economic, political and social systems, a great deal of thought must be given to the inputs and management of teacher education. This presupposes that improvement on teacher education is invariably, a way to improve the general productivity of the economy. It is recommended that if the suggestions as spelt out in this paper are strictly adhered to, there will be an improvement in teacher-education programme in Nigeria.

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