

TEACHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Teacher education is a sine qua non to qualitative, effective and efficient education, and education is the foundation upon which a prosperous and stable socio-political and economic development of the country is based. It is therefore expedient to understand the importance of teacher particularly in Nigeria. The aim of this paper is to examine some of the problems and prospects of teachers' education in Nigeria. Methodologically, it is based on the explorative and the analytical research method. Some of the major problem identified by the paper are poor academic entrance performance of the students, overloaded curriculum, over- emphasis is on examination, inadequate field experience, inadequate teaching staff and supporting staff. The authors recommended the; enrolment of academically superior students, more focus on pedagogy and not theory; that government should invest more on the latest teaching materials; teachers should now embrace information technology to facilitate knowledge and adequate and continuous monitoring exercise should be encouraged.

Keywords: Curriculum, Teaching Practice, Teacher Education and Challenges

Introduction

Teacher education is basic in any society, Nigeria as a country is not immune to this basic concept, hence countries all over the world pays a lot of attention to the training of her teachers, this is because the teachers have been identified as the solid foundation towards the growth and development of the society. The teaching profession is a noble profession that creates all other professions and professionals in the society, therefore it of utmost importance to pay more attention to the actual agent, the teachers and their training if the goals of national developments are to be achieved.

The qualitative training of teachers even, become more important because any mistake committed by a teacher or any error in the teaching curriculum streams down from generation to generation. Therefore, the training of the teachers becomes even more important so as to avoid a generational set of ignorance citizens.

Furthermore, when an Engineer makes a mistake, only a few people die, when a Medical Doctor commits a procedural error in the theatre, only the patient dies, however if there is any error from the part of the teacher, the whole community feels the pain. Hence, all hands must be on deck to prevent these mistakes from the teachers and all available resources must be deployed in solving the problems if they ever emerged. The aim of this paper is to examine the anomalies in teachers' education in Nigeria with a view of suggesting some practical solutions to them.

Conceptual Clarification

Who is a teacher?

A teacher is someone that has been given the responsibility of impacting the necessary skills and knowledge onto the learners. He/she has the responsibility to transmit knowledge to the learners, with the aim of bringing out the desired results or outcome from the learner. Learning cannot be

said to have taken place if the students learning experience remain the same or has not improve at the end of the class instruction.

What is education?

According to Luo (2024) education can be defined as the ability to read, write and perform some skills for one to become morally acceptable to the society. At the national level, education is the tool for building a united, independent and a healthy, egalitarian society that can maintain its values. Education, is therefore, regarded as the producer of manpower needed for the socio-political and economic development of a nation. Consequently, complete education cannot be achieved in the classroom alone a large part takes place outside the classroom, hence the slogan “Education from cradle to grave” or “Education from dawn to dusk”

For learning therefore to occur, teaching is the main purpose of activity that must take place, as socialization process is never accidental. In a nutshell, for education to take place, such education may be seen to be planned and delivered in a systematic form. In the way, religious, political, military, occupational and recreational institutions to mention but a few, educate in this systematic fashion. Thus, we can safely deduce that education is a way of life which goes on at all times in our societies whether such education is planned or unplanned, noticed or unnoticed, positive or negative. This way of life may be directed or not directed, guided or not guided, but is always influenced by society or community where it is practiced.

According to Bates & Poole (2013), education may be incidental if planned or accidental if unplanned; it must however deploy the latest technology to achieve the desired result. Therefore, to look at education only as an organized process would give a limited picture of what actually happens in the socialization process where the total environment plays a very vital role. Therefore, education must be seen to include things that are meaningful to the learners that would provide them with necessary skills to cope with future challenges.

Types of Education in Nigeria

However, the National Policy of Education (FGN) in Ogunode, Attah, & Ebute (2024) has unequivocally enunciated the different forms of education in Nigeria.

These are: early childhood/pre-primary education, basic education, secondary school education, mass literacy, adult programmes and non-formal education. Others are: Sciences, Technical and Vocational Education, Tertiary/ Higher Education, Teacher Education, Technology Education, Open and Distance Learning Education and Special Education. Hence, higher education can be described as the teaching and learning that are obtainable in the Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Over-Emphasis on Teaching Methodology

In Nigerian teacher education programme, unnecessary emphasize is always placed on numerous teaching methodologies at the detriment of the actual content which the student- teacher is to dish out to the actual students in the classroom. For instance, a student studying a combination of Political science/social studies is required to attend three different classes on teaching methodologies in Political science teaching methodology, social studies teaching methodology and general studies GSE teaching methodology. At the end of the semester such a student is also required to sit for

examinations in all these three different departments aimed at the same goals and objective. Therefore, concentrating more on teaching methodology at the detriment of the actual content of the curriculum itself (Collins, 2018).

Poor Academic Entrance Performance of the Students

A good number of students that are on teacher education programme in Nigeria can be said to be those with very poor academic background. Most of them actually applied for other lucrative course and courses with better job prospects, in the universities but found themselves in faculties of education and colleges of education due to their poor educational background and their inability to gain admission into the universities. This puts a lot of pressure on the lectures to drive home their points in class and demands extra efforts to ensure that teaching and learning actually takes place in the classroom. A concept that would have been understood in minutes takes hours before the students understand such concept (Gbore, 2013).

Overloaded curriculum

This is another big anomaly in teachers' education in Nigeria. Students are required in most cases to take a minimum of sixteen courses per semester. For instance, a student studying English language /political science is required to register for four courses in English language, four in political science, four general courses GSE and another four in education. This situation put too much burden and pressure on the students, thereby adding to the already identified poor academic background, hence poor academic results and subsequent withdrawal from the teachers' training programme leading to further reduction in the number of teachers that are urgently needed in the society (Israel, Chijioke, Israel, & Cherechi, 2019).

Emphasis on Examination

In most cases undue attention is often given to examination, which is the summative evaluation, at the detriment of the diagnostic and formative evaluation and more importantly the actual practice. Students don't read or attend class for the knowledge acquisition but merely to read and subsequently pass the examination. Hence you have a situation where by students only pass through the educational institutions, without the institutions actually passing through them. Hence, the crèche "La cram, la pour". Meaning cramming the class notes/textbooks and regurgitating at during the examination (Moja, 2000).

Inadequate Field Experience

There also exist the problem of inadequate field experience, this is due to the fact that most of the students are not exposed to field trips to natural environment and habitats where nature is seen, observed, studied and recorded at first hand, such as different species of rocks, rivers, oceans, wild animals and so on. This does not give students the opportunity to learn from the nature, as more than 90% of teaching and learning actually takes place within the four walls of the classrooms, this goes a long way to affect their level of understanding of such natural phenomenon (Koyenikan, & Anozie, 2018).

Weak Mentoring During Teaching Practice

Teaching practice is a core area in teacher's education, which requires diligence and above all adequate mentoring of the student teachers. However, most of the cooperating teachers do not pay much attention to the training and mentoring of the student-teachers', and this reflects in the

students output in the classroom as most cooperating teachers do not care to assess the lesson notes of the student teachers. Also, some of the teaching practice supervisors from the parent schools are not always thorough in the assessment and evaluation of the students, to most of the teaching practice supervisors, the scores are more important than the practical teaching (Ekundayo, Alonge, Kolawole, & Ekundayo, 2014).

Inadequate Teaching Staff

There exists the prevalent problem of inadequate teaching staff these is because more people run away from teaching, those that accidentally finds themselves in teaching are not well remunerated, no welfare package for the teachers and the failure of successive government to employ more teaching staff, hence, student keeps enrolling and the figures move at geometric progression, while the teachers figure move at arithmetic progression. According to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), teachers to student rate should be one (1) teacher to thirty-four (34) students (1:34), but in Nigeria its one (1) teacher to fifty (50) students (1:50) or more. Therefore, such a teacher is neither effective nor efficient in the classroom to impact the necessary skills and knowledge on the students (Jacob, & Garba, 2021).

Inadequate Practical Structures

Practical laboratories such as computers, physics, chemistry, biology laboratories, home economics rooms are luxury in most of the teachers' training Colleges and where they do exist, they lack the required facilities and equipment. As a matter of fact, a goof number of practical laboratory structures in some private secondary schools' out weight and has more value than those of the public teachers training institutions. In this situation, since the student-teacher who is supposed to be well grounded in the practical application of knowledge or curriculum instruction is not well grounded from the teachers' training institutes, the question is what practical knowledge is such a person going to transfer to the students in the real sense of it after graduation from school? (Musah, & Umar, 2017).

Institutional Intrusion

Sometimes, there are undue and unnecessary interference from members of the governing council. Thus, the Provosts are only the chief executives on paper, the jeure, but the chairman of the governing council is actually the one in control and the one in power- the de factor head of the institution. This situation erodes the power of the provost and opens it to ridicules in the hands of the members of staff that have strong connections and personal attachment to some members of the governing council, this bringing about indiscipline and indecency among such members of staff, which goes a long way to negatively affect the overall growth and goals of the institution (Nwafor & Joseph, 2021).

Accreditation Fallacy

Accreditation exercise is specifically designed to monitor and maintain the academic and infrastructural standards of the various institution. The reality of some of this accreditation is that, most times vital indexes that that ad the development of the institution are often jettison at the altar of personal relationships and emotion. At the end of the day, the accreditation exercise does not give the true reflection of the institution and thus stagnating the overall development of both staff and students of such institutions. Official document is padded and alter for institution to get the pass

mark, even when its glaringly clear that such institution does not merit the accreditation pass mark (Osarenren-Osagahe, 2014).

Low Welfare Package

The welfare package for most workers are those contributions they are able to generate from their meagre salary. There should be adequate welfare package by the government for these workers. These welfare package should cover their health needs, staff training and development, most of the training embark upon by the staff are from personal account, hence the welfare package ought to be looked into. The so call pension scheme put in place by the government are not easily accessible to by the workers particularly after retirement. Most retirees end up dying without having access to their pension fund, to some observers the pension scheme is as a scam, a fraud against the workers (Ibelegbu, Abanyam, Nwachukwu & Garba, 2023).

Incessant Strikes

Another problem is the issue of incessant strike by the members of staff, the incessant strike is often induced by unfulfilled promises by the successive government. Students that are supposed to study for three or four years in the tertiary institutions often end up spending five to six years. The actual date of graduation is often defined as X, because it's in most cases not known or defined. The incessant strike does not give room for the institution to have proper academic plan, and often retort to crash programme in order to make up for the lost academic calendar (Yohanna, & Diggah, 2022).

Teaching Materials

The teaching aids/instructional materials are grossly inadequate and insufficient, a good number of lecturers only go into the classroom to dictate lecture notes to the student's audio-visual material such as television sets, radio, computer set, sewing machine and so on, are not readily available in our tertiary institutions. This situation does not only affect the teacher in impacting and transferring knowledge adequately to the students, but it also has an adverse effect on the output and overall academic performance of the students based on the instructional curriculum (Lawan, Jacob, Gregory, & Lawan, 2020).

Prospects of Teachers' Education in Nigeria

Enrolment: The point of enrolment is one area that needs to be address, our various tertiary institution should endeavor to enroll academically sound students so that focus can be on pedagogical not theory. Such students are very easy to developed into first class students at graduation, compare to those who are low achievers. Only 44 percent of students enrolled on yearly basis in our colleges of education are on the merit list, while the remaining 66 percent are made of less qualified and educationally ill-equipped students from the politicians, indigenship, quota system requirements and others. The question is how will these set of students excel when they are finally enrolled for teachers' education in the tertiary institution.

Information Technology: This should be embraces by our tertiary institution, it will go will promote functional education. The incidence of covid-19 has gone a long way to further emphasize the importance of information technology, as many conferences, seminars and workshops are now held via the internet space. Hence, it becomes even more expedient for us as nation and as a people that wishes to progress educationally to embrace information technology. This will aid the teaching

and learning of the students on our various campuses and even enhance the capacity development of the lecturers.

Content: Another solution to the problem of teacher's education in Nigeria is the need for the government and all stakeholders in the business of education both public and private is to focus more on content/basic learning, rather than the periodic rituals of examination. The focus on the content will make students teachers a better teacher at the end of the instruction and the mastery of the subject matter will be improve upon rather than just examination alone. When this happens, it has a ripple effect on the learning and retentive ability of the learners and will improve the overall educational attainment in the country.

Investment in Education: Government should invest more on education, according to UNESCO--26 percent budget should be dedicated to education, only 12 and 15 percent in Nigeria since 1999. The investment in education will not only improve the quality of both the teachers and the learners but will also serve as a source of motivation for the teachers and when teachers are well motivated, the level of productivity, dedication and commitment to the teaching profession will also improve. The investment in education should also include the continuous training of the lectures in attending conferences, seminar and workshops.

Monitoring: There is an urgent need for the continuous monitoring of the contents, teachers and learners in the colleges of education, this monitoring will help to enhance and improve the quality of both the input and the output of the educational system. Various quality assurance teams should be made to do their job, from the federal, to the state and the local government. It will also help to maintain discipline, promote orderliness and the maintenance of law and others in our various educational spaces.

Instructional Materials: The importance of instructional materials in the teaching and learning process cannot be over emphasized. This is because it has the ability to bring the real-life situation into the classrooms. Hence, it becomes pertinent that more focus, time and resources should be deploy towards the production, maintenance and the enhancement of instructional materials in our colleges of education. As a matter of fact, instructional material units must be established in all teaches training institutions in the country.

Conclusion

Teacher education is a catalyst to the educational, socio-political and economic development of any nation. Nigeria as a country is not immune from this development. However, for this development to be achieved, the country must accord teacher education programme its rightful position in the society. Teacher education programme should no longer be seen as an all-comers affairs. Nigeria as a country should take practical and proactive steps to ensure that teacher education is taken to the next level. This can be achieved by surmounting the identified challenges / obstacles in the paper - inadequate instructional materials, low entry qualifications, overloaded curriculum, low welfare package for teachers, industrial unrest among others.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations are made:

There is the need to move away from the traditional idea of placing too much emphasis on method of teaching over and above knowledge of the subject matter. The focus now should be on both the

what (knowledge) and how (method). For this to be fully achieved, more qualified teaching staff should be employed for teacher education institutions. The steps taken by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in recent times along this line are quite commendable. There is need for regular training and retraining of teachers at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary) for better and increased efficiency and effectiveness. Budgetary allocations to education should be increased to cater for infrastructural development especially in teacher education institutions in the country. The current level of funding is grossly inadequate which has been largely responsible for infrastructural and personnel deficit in our tertiary institutions. There should be proper and continuous monitoring of teachers and teacher education programme to avoid the employment of "reluctant teachers" in the system. Only those who have a flair for teaching and the profession should be employed to teach using the latest information technology to assist in improving the teaching-learning situation.

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