

TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA; PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Teachers play important role in enhancing quality in educational system. It is through teaching and learning that education is made possible, in line with this, this paper tries to examine the need to enhance teacher education in Nigeria. This is essential because of the changes in the globe and for our educational system to meet up with existing trends, there is need to transform our teacher education. Many Nations across the globe have made sudden changes in recent years especially with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This paper attempts to look into the concept of teacher education, which refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, approaches, methodologies and skills they require to perform their task effectively, the present status of teacher education, and its reforms. It further outlines the challenges; among them are inadequate funds, lack of creativity in student teachers etc. the paper made some recommendation for the way forward which include all administration for teacher education should be exposed to in-service training.

Key words: teacher education, reforms in teacher education, teacher education programmes

Introduction

Teacher Education is the only known agent of transformation for national growth and development. It addresses environmental, social and economic contexts to create locally relevant and culturally appropriate teacher education programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers (UNESCO, 2005). The concept of teacher education is a global phenomenon that requires proper understanding, the benefit of which goes for both individuals and nations as well. Darline Harmond (2007) indicated that, among all educational resources, teachers training is especially a critical contributor to the educational outcomes and consequently the success of a nation to advance in its sociopolitical environment. Teacher training quality refers to the process of ensuring that education programmes are designed in such a way to help prospective teachers to know and understand a wide range of things about teaching and learning and their social and cultural contexts.

There is need to refocus and reposition teachers education programmes in Nigeria in order to address the challenges of globalization and its attendant effects on education, especially at this time in our national history when the entire Nigerian education system is undergoing far reaching systematic reforms. According to Obioma (2013) education having been identified as an instrument per excellence for economic and social reconstruction, and with teachers playing a fundamental role in the education delivery process, professionals and teacher educators must seek strategies to reconstruct the paradigm for teachers' education and development through appropriate curriculum change. Furthermore, as we try to meet local needs, our teachers must meet minimum global bench marks and best practices.

Globalization is the key factor driving the changes we witness and experience today, it is not merely an economic phenomenon; it is multidimensional, it affects every aspect of our lives; politics, education, trade, leisure and so on. Globalization encourages rapid growth and influx of trade, human capital and services within and between countries of the world with emerging technologies playing a very important role in the integration of the world's economic and social activities.

In Nigeria, the rapid spread and use of information communication technologies (ICT) such as mobile phones and internet has transformed our lives and economy in an unprecedented manner. Many countries like Canada, Malaysia, Singapore, India etc, have also embraced the emerging technologies (ICT) and as a result they are experiencing economic growth, while some sub-Saharan African nations are slow in integrating into the global economy and therefore are left behind "In Nigeria, Education has been identified as the strategic instrument for addressing present and future challenges of globalization and impact of knowledge economy" Teacher Education particularly is key to our emancipation as a nation technologically.

What is Teacher Education?

Teacher education or teacher training refers to the policies, procedures, and provision designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, approaches, methodologies and skills they requires to perform their tasks effectively in the wider community (Emetaron, 2012). It is a formal training provided for would-be teachers in an institution of higher learning to equip them with necessary skills, knowledge and experiences to bring about changes in the behavior of learners and enable the prospective teachers to succeeds in their teaching career.

The prospective teachers gets trained to equip themselves with the best teaching skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors which are required to perform effectively in any learning environment like a classroom or school.

Reforms and Present Status of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Education still remains the engine room for the growth and development of any nation including Nigeria. Globally, countries of the world always sought to improve the quality of her education especially developing countries (Ocho 2005).

Teacher education programmes, are offered in the country by different teacher education institutions as declared in the national policy on education. Much improvement on teacher education has been made, however; a lot still needs to be done in the context of lifelong education. Following persistent demand by the national union of teachers (NUT), teaching in Nigeria is now legally recognized as a profession and N.C.E is now the minimum qualification to enter into the teaching profession. Teacher education the world over is often seen as very important because no educational system can rise above the quality of the teachers (N.P.E, 1981).

Teacher education in Nigeria has been undergoing changes across the country right from the missionary activities through the colonial era to the post independence era and modern period. Teacher education in Nigeria today is facing some problems such as low quality of students admitted into the school system, etc. The current problems of teacher education therefore needs to be addressed in order to improve the situation of Nigerian teacher education (Taiwo, 1999). Teacher education in Nigeria today is facing problems leading to lack of tilt concept awareness, learning and teaching technological issues, teachers' welfare issues and poor communication issues. (Idowu, Ogundele&Mainowe, 2017). Teacher education programme in Nigeria was further enhanced when the University College Ibadan founded in 1948 introduced a one – year diploma course in education as from 1957/58 session. The 1946 Richards constitution divided the country into three regions – east, west and North and each with a regional assembly (Okojie, 2020).

The major turning point in the history of education in Nigeria after Nigeria's independence in 1960 began in September 8, 1969 when the first ever curriculum National Conference was inaugurated by the Federal Government and led by the Commissioner for Education, Mr. Wenike Briggs. This was followed by the first National policy on education by the Federal Government in 1977, which recommend a uniform structure of education known as the 6-3-3-4 system of education which is a radical departure from British implanted Education system of 6-5-2-3 in the country. Since the publication of the first edition of (NPE) in 1977, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th editions were published in 1981, 1998 and 2004 respectively. The reviews were necessitated by the need to keep with the dynamics of social change and demands on education. The fourth edition (FRN, 2004) was necessitated by some policy innovations and changes and the need to update the third edition. (Awofala&Sopekun, 2013)

On Monday 6th September 1976 universal primary Education (UPE) was introduced in Nigeria in order to universalize education by General OlusegunObasanjo, the then Military Head of State. The scheme aimed at establishing equal educational opportunities for all children of School age in Nigeria and to gradually eliminate illiteracy and ignorance in the Nigerian society. The scheme met a dead rock because of fund. Upon the return of democracy in Nigeria to a democratically elected government in 1999, the UPE was improved upon; with expansion of its scheme from six to nine years basic education and the scheme was changed to universal basic education (UBE) which was launched by the then president Chief M.O.AObasanjo on the 30th of September, 1999 in Sokoto (Obioma, 2010). Under the new scheme, free education was extended to cover the junior secondary schools. This means all children of school age will receive uninterrupted formal education; 6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary school.

Teacher education was not left out. However, Fafunwa (1995) noted that teacher education at the university level was on the horns of dilemma when the Ashby commission was set up in 1959. The commission had it that higher education must be built upon the foundations laid by the primary and secondary education and that if the foundations were too weak or narrow, higher education would not be able to meet the requirement needs of the nations. The commission's report also noted the imbalance between elementary, secondary and higher education. It therefore recommended that one out of every two teacher in a secondary school should be a graduate. According to the commission, it was specifically recommended that a new corps of grade, teachers also be styled well-qualified, non graduate teachers should be trained to man the lower levels of secondary schools and teacher training colleges (then).

The National Policy on Education (NPE) also stated that teachers in Nigeria Education Institutions from pre-primary to the university will be professionally trained and that teacher education programmes will be structured to equip teachers for effective performance of their

duties (Ugadu and Odo 2012). Teacher education in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of innovations leading to reforms.

However, a lot still need to be done. Government in all levels should automatically spend more money on education because it is an investment.

Teacher Education in some Nations of the World

Singapore shifted from just getting teachers to school as it's key goal during the period of the massive growth of its education system after independence in 1965 to providing teachers of quality. In 1997, the introduced the thinking schools learning national reform which explicitly redefined the role of teachers.

At the centre of Singapore's framework is the belief that the learner is the centre of our teacher education mission. The skills and knowledge spelt out in this framework refer to key skills and knowledge competencies that 21st century teaching professionals require in order to bring about 21st century literacies and learning (OECD 2011). Another nation that has taken teacher education seriously is Canada.

Canada supports teaching and requires all public-school teachers to complete a professional programme of university-based training at one of a limited number of teacher education institutions. There are around 50 teacher education programmes in Canada, making quality control easier for provincial governments. Teachers are frequently motivated by a combination of financial and non-financial incentives. Provisions are made for professional growth, postgraduates awards and study leave options. These factors and more promote real growth and retention. (OEDD, 2011)

Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria is currently faced with many challenges, among them are;

- **Quality control in teacher training institutions:** Nigeria has not attained the standards to ensure that quality education is given to teachers. Some government agencies that 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 institute of education in the universities. The National Teachers Institution (NTI) is the body responsible for pre-service and in-service training programmes of 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 registration and code of conduct for teacher.

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. Inspection is not being properly done. The outreach programmes of NTI are poorly monitored by inexperienced officers. Poor quality lectures are given to these students, thereby promoting examination malpractice (Akindutire & Ekundaya, 2012)

- **Poor Enrolment:** teacher education suffers from poor enrolment. The. The poor condition of service over the years has made teaching very unattractive to the most qualified persons in Nigeria. The young ones do not crave to become teachers which is a huge challenge to teacher education in Nigeria.

- **Technological change:** Technological change which increases overall productivity, is the foundation for growth in a global economy, particularly information and communication technologies (ICT) which according to (Ocho, 2005) is a phenomenal and revolutionary, influencing all aspects of the processes and under pins the function of modern society. Nigeria is yet to be grounded on it. However in adapting to continual technological, social and political changes of the country and the world, educational programmes are expected to unleash the powerful forces of emerging technologies to produce competent graduates who would not only meet our local needs in the job market, but can cross borders to compete the best in the world.
- **Inadequate Funding:** The Nigerian education in general has always experienced very poor funding. Briggs (2010), opines that the federal government has never been able to get the 26% budgetary allocation stipulated by UNESCO to education, the highest being 6.4% of the budgetary allocation to the education sector. This always results to industrial actions due to non payments or delayed payments of salaries.
- Another major challenge in teacher education in Nigeria today is the lack of interest among secondary school graduates in teaching profession, owing to the negative image that teachers have in the society (Butu, Madu and Hassan 2012). The low status of teachers in the country discourages studies from enrolling in teacher education programmes, and those who do enroll do so because they have no other option, just like last resort.

Improvement of Teacher Education and Development

Teacher education programmes are not only to impact the teacher trainees with knowledge but, to inculcate in them the necessary skills and knowledge that will allow them become effective and efficient classroom teachers that will ensure quality assurance in the implementation of the school curriculum. Today teacher education is much improved than it was before independence and few decades thereafter. The National Policy on Education, published in 1977 and reversed is 1981, 1981 and 2004 clearly articulates the importance attached to teacher education and affirms that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers". The policy gives the goals of teacher education as follows:

- Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- Encouraging the spirit of enquiring and creativity in teachers.
- Helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
- Enhancing teachers commitment to the teaching profession

The policy makes it mandatory for all teachers in Nigeria to be trained and stipulate (NCE) as the minimum qualification to the profession. The policy also provides that "teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum" and that teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. It further recognizes the need for in-service training "as an integral part of continuing teacher education" (Orrafor, 2009)

The teacher education has been considered very relevant for Nigerians societal development because, it serves as the foundation for quality and relevant education at all levels of the system. There is therefore the need for all Nigerian teachers to be proficient in computer education. It is only when we are well equipped in computer that we can imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the 21st century.

Conclusion

The focus of teacher preparation must shift from mere training to education. A holistic teacher education programme is strongly advocated. For teacher education to set its glory of this democratic dispensation there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The salary and welfare packages of teacher should be enhanced greatly, because without teachers, no profession can exist.

Recommendations

Nigeria education system as a whole need to be enhanced, on that note this paper recommends the following, as the way forward for teacher education in line with global best practices;

- Curriculum development and review on continuous basis should be encouraged to keep pace with current trends.
- Teaching should be recognized as an academically taught clinic-practice profession. This requires close cooperation between colleges of education and actual practicing schools, the appointment of master teachers as clinical faculty in the college of education programme, is strongly advocated (Yusuf, 2022)
- The Federal, State and Local Government should ensure that trained and experienced personnel are available for educational policy implementation. Policy implementation will be successfully carried out if adequate consultations and dialogue with the implementers are properly carried out
- All the tiers of government should make sure that stake holders of educational system are all well represented in the process of policy planning, formulation and implementation. If this is done, the problem of successful implementation will be minimal.
- “UBAEC/BESDA Model mentoring/coaching peer-tutoring, subject lead teachers and cluster lead teachers should be encouraged to provide personal support to teachers to improve their instruction. So far, 1367 master trainers and 3,176 mentors/coaches have been trained in the BESDA programme” (Yusuf, 2022)
- Most of the failures experienced in teacher’s policy implementation is caused by inadequate funding. Therefore, the government should ensure that adequate fund is provided for the implementation of educational policies because this requires a lot of fund.

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