

THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

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Abstract

Education is the strongest instrument devised by man for his socio-economic emancipation and progress. It is an instrument set up by the society for its own perpetuation and continuity. An uneducated man is an unproductive and an economic liability. This therefore leaves no other option to us for survival but through education, and education can only be sustained through Teacher Education which must be given priority attention so as to produce a good and quality education system that will in time produce quality graduates who will become experts in their various fields to contribute to the economic recovery of the nation for a reliable, standard living style. The various economic, social, political and administrative obstacles in the way of a good and quality teacher education notwithstanding, it is hoped that the new National Policy on Education, with its firm commitments and bold articulation of Nigeria's collective educational aspirations to correct the previous ills in the system, is the perfect answer for the country's economic rehabilitation and self reliance.

Introduction

To the Nigerian, just like other nationals, education is the preparation of the individual for a happy and useful living within the society. It is also a means for realizing national, social, cultural, economic and political needs and aspirations. Teacher Education is the pivot of this education and a vital organ of development. An abundant and increasing supply of highly educated people are necessary for any socio-economic rehabilitation and growth. Teacher Education which guarantees this supply is therefore the sine qua non for the economic rejuvenation reliance of this nation. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 1981) posits that education has become a condition for national survival and according to Ayodele, (2004), the history of the development of any nation is tied to the history of its educational development. And as no education can rise above the quality of her teachers, and teachers, according to Uche (1984) through the school system can influence and stimulate change in society, it therefore becomes imperative that teachers have to be given good quality of education to facilitate and perpetuate a good and quality education system for a rapid national economic recovery.

Education is believed to be the most important catalyst to all socio-economic, political, scientific and technological advancement. "Any society that is not educated will be underdeveloped while that which is highly educated will be highly developed" (Ayodele, 2004). Audu, (2004), describes the uneducated man as, "an unproductive and an economic liability". If education is to "prepare the individual for a happy and useful living within the society" and this "useful living" can only be made possible in a reconstructed and reliable economy, this paper will therefore look at the role of the teacher - who is a product of the teacher education programme in bringing about this economic El Dorado in our dear country, Nigeria.

Definition of Terms

Van Dalen and Brillell in Okorie (1989:1) defines the teacher as, one who guides pupils through planned activities so that they may acquire the richest learning possible from their experiences. Bigge and Hunt (1968:1) see the teacher as, a person who selects the subject matter to be learned and performs a series of operations whose purpose is to transmit this subject matter to the students. Isika (1970) sees the teacher as, an agent of national unity, the primary instrument for the socio-economic transformation of society.

Teacher education, according to Adogo (2002), is the type of education that prepares

individuals to become teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for teaching and learning. Another academic giant Agogo, (2004) sees "teacher education as the process of instilling professional competence relevant to the national development in our would be teachers for our economic growth and nation building". Economic rehabilitation is looked at through the eyes of Hornby, thus: "Economic" an adjective meaning, connected with the trade, industry and development of the wealth of a country or a given area. The word "Rehabilitation" as a noun means to return someone or something to its previous good condition while "Reliance" as a noun is defined to mean, the state of needing somebody or something in order to survive or be successful. From all these definitions, we can safely say that this paper is to discuss what ways the process; and programme of teacher training can help in turning around the ailing wealth of the nation, not only to its former healthy state of the immediate post (Nigerian) civil war era, but also to make it grow from strength to strength so that the citizens can proudly depend on it for survival and the overall development of Nigeria.

Teacher Education in Nigeria

There are three basic systems of education in Nigeria viz the traditional, the Islamic and the Western Systems. The traditional system is embryonic in organization and localized within the home and the village framework. Its emphasis is on character training, learning of the customs, traditions, values, skills and the traditional occupations, with the traditional religion occupying a prominent position. The Islamic system is basically aimed at turning out Islamic jurists and clerics, while the western (formal) type, organized in schools, colleges and allied institutions has English Language as the Language of Instruction, This, along with other aspects of the western culture like Christianity, a new political system, etc were introduced into Nigeria by the British.

The history of teacher education in Nigeria, according to Uche and Onyernerekega (1998) dates back to the 1880s when the missionaries were producing teacher evangelists. Initially, teacher education was informal with children recruited and trained specifically to propagate the Gospel. The schools were build within the church premises and the students lived with the missionaries. Such "boarding house" systems had some obvious advantages of strict discipline and helping with the church chores. This system later developed into the apprenticeship system. Gradually, missionary bodies began to establish teacher training institutions to supplement the prevalent apprenticeship system. The C.M.S. church took the lead with the opening of a teacher training college within the C.M.S. Grammar School in 1859 at Lagos, a few months ahead of the Methodist Mission which opened her own teacher training Institution in Ibadan. Thus the institutions continued to grow in numbers across the country till today.

Nduka (1987:132) warns that any system of education that is religiously oriented is unlikely to generate any forward looking change. Both the traditional and the Islamic systems fall into this group and therefore can never liberate their adherents from any socio - economic, scientific and technological quagmire. If Nigeria is therefore, lo be developed and achieve any economic rehabilitation and become self-reliant, our best bet is the system that is secular and scientifically "forward looking" and not that which is based on the belief in a dogmatic, pre-ordained system of society. Science, we know, is the basis of modem technology and the dynamos that powers"changes" for economic recuperation and progress. Towards this end, the western formal system is the answer - but not its adoption "hook line and sinker" as its comparative bankruptcy in the area of turning out dynamic and functional citizens for an independent and self reliant nation has long been discovered.

To develop the Nigerian nation and release her potentials for her economic greatness, it is necessary to develop a new educational system that has firm commitments. Nations desirous of moving out of the circle of mediocrity, not to say inferiority, have often used the potentials of education. Prussia did that after her defeat at Jena in 1806: Japan, in the 1870s and the former U.S.S.R., after the October Revolution. The U.S also did it, to challenge the Russian Sputnik and later beat her to the moon! That is education, through Teacher Education.

The new National Policy on Education represents Nigeria's boldest attempt at articulating our collective educational aspirations aimed at correcting the previous ills of the system and building a

virile, progressive, economically reliant and politically united and peaceful Nigeria. In his treatise, "The Republic", Plato posited that, "good life for the individual is very much dependent on a good society"¹. This "good society" can only come about through education. The new National Policy on Education and its integrated teacher education programme is capable of producing the educative process that can "integrate the Nigerian child into a sound and productive citizen" that would value the dignity of labour (FRN,1998:7) This implies that the teacher must be given good quality education, to facilitate a good quality education system for a rapid economic emancipation and reliance.

This new national policy also provides among others, that the system should produce teachers who should strive among other things, to:

- a) Meet the manpower needs of the nation.
- b) Transform Nigeria from a consumer to a producer nation recognized among the industrial nations.
- c) Enthroned order in our morally deprived and socially violent society;
- d) Raise the standard of living of all Nigerians through new orientations on productivity and reward;
- e) Facilitate and sustain the unity, development and wealth of the nation; etc (F.R.N, 1998: 25)

If these laudable plans are adequately implemented, there is no doubt that such a comprehensive teacher education programme will lead the nation to the desired economic recovery and self reliance which is the hall mark of our dream nation.

Making the Teacher

In preparing the teacher for this great task, the teacher education programme should aim at relating the standard of the teachers to the socio-economic realities of the society. In line with this, Smith (1990) posited that, in appraising the worth of the teacher, both the socio - economic and the personality variables should be considered besides his technical competence. The programme should produce teachers who are equipped with knowledge in depth in their special areas and technical strategies, to enable maximum flexibilities in reacting to the dynamics of development in an economically reliable Nigeria. Such training of the teachers should recognize the distinction between what Shulman (1987) refers to as "curriculum knowledge" and "pedagogical content knowledge"¹ to be able to function well.

The objectives of Teacher Education in Nigeria include among others,

- i. To produce highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- ii. To provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make the adaptable to any changing situations not only in their country but also in the wider world, etc. (F.R.N,1998: 27)

The curriculum for teacher - education in Nigeria includes:

1. General studies
2. Foundation Studies - History, sociology, psychology, philosophy, Guidance and counselling.
3. Academic Disciplines (Any two Teaching subjects)
4. Teaching practice.

If these objectives and study areas are accomplished then the qualitative aspects of Nigerian education could be guaranteed so that the Nigerian economy can be rehabilitated and the nation made self reliant in order to march towards becoming the Japan of Africa.

Over the years, very many institutions were established to provide professional training needed for self and societal economic emancipation. Some of these institutions are:-

The Grade III Teachers' Colleges (Now extinct)

The Grade II Teachers' Colleges (Being phased out)

The Advanced Teachers' Colleges
The Colleges of Education
The National Teachers' Institute
The Institutes of Education affiliated to the Universities.
The Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities.

The professional bodies that handle teacher education include:

The Curriculum Association of Nigeria.
The National Educational Research Council
The National Board for Technical Education
The National Association of Education Planners and Administrators.

Among all these institutions, Olugo, (2004: 7) argues that, Colleges of Education are better suited for the preparation of teachers because according to her, at that level, teacher trainees are taught pedagogic content knowledge while at the University level, they are satisfied with just "Lecturing." She goes further to recommend that "the Universities should produce education graduates in administration, management, curriculum design, psychology, sociology, counselling etc. Her reason for this is her fear that "graduate teachers from the universities may emulate their lecturers by lecturing instead of teaching by organizing and directing the pupils' learning activities.

It should be noted that the secondary school level has become the entry - point for all the tertiary and professional institutions, hence we have a very large population and massive expansion of schools at that level nationwide. This high population and proliferation of schools have their attendant problems - the high rate of delinquency and violence in the schools - the same pool from where our teacher training institutions have to unavoidably draw their intake. These delinquent behaviour spill over to these training institutions, thus constituting one of the problems of teacher education in Nigeria - indiscipline. This vice can adversely affect all our efforts to put the economy on the recovery path if not checked. But with a veritable teacher education programme, this can be put right to nurture a viable economy upon which Nigeria can rely for her flight to stardom.

Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The situation in Nigeria now seems to have reached a point which Durkheim (1951:40) would describe as a state of anomie, a state of rulelessness, a state of normlessness, a state of meaninglessness, a state in which everything is wrong and the normal machinery of state power is powerless to correct, and a state of affairs in which societal goals have become undefined. In a country where there are no jobs for the certificated, where the most affluent is the least educated, where the most venerated is the rich illiterate, where higher qualifications attract no remunerations, where praise singing and sycophancy is a virtue and where lying, looting and deceit have been legalized in government circles one should therefore not be surprised if our children are getting increasingly disenchanted with the academics and disillusioned with the acquisition of "unprofitable" academic certificates. They would therefore prefer political thuggery, cultism, armed banditry and even armed robbery to waiting for "Godot" for the jobs that never exist.

The societal expectations of the "Teacher"¹ is not being met. These expectations according to Uche and Onyemerekeya (1998) include: *to promote the teaching and learning process; to have a firm understanding of the subjects taught; to be the custodian of discipline and morality, to be the surrogate of middleclass morality etc.* The teacher, being a member of the morally depraved and economically corroding society has been de-robed of these virtues he was once known for, therefore making the society (including the would be trainees of the teacher) to lose faith in the teacher and his "powers." This leads to truancy and nonchalant attitude towards education which is a problem for teacher education in Nigeria.

Another problem is that revealed by Nwagwu (1987) that school enrolments in some states have started to decrease as a result of dropouts and parents' inability to pay the high school fees often disguised as "levies," "subscription" etc.

The Federal Government enacted the new national policy as a panacea for all these and other ills since the policy is believed to be capable of planting and nurturing a self-sustaining indigenous growth of science and technology that can ensure our socio-economic reconstruction. But unfortunately,

the too many overlapping and conflicting interests, corruption and other ancillary demands of the society have emasculated the successful implementation of the policy. This negative trend greatly impedes on the successful running of the teacher education programme.

There is also a yawning gap between the new national policy and its implementation. This policy (the 6-3-3-4 system) was, according to Nwagwu (1987), well designed and well intentioned but the objectives are too lofty and we lack the patience, will and resources to implement them successfully and faithfully. Taiwo, (1980: 8) rendered this more succinctly when he said:

The National Policy on Education was very ambitious and full of hopes and PROMISES. It was conceived during a period of buoyant economy but born in a period of tight economy, which made it difficult to realize the hopes and fulfill the promise expeditiously, if at all.

Thus in reality, many secondary and teachers colleges in this country today are being organized and managed exactly as they were, before the birth of the new policy, the only difference being the increase in the number of subjects, the delay of students for one extra year to make the six years and the change of the academic calendar. We still continue to produce the academic "theorists" dangerously wanting in the practical application of scientific and technological concepts thus living in two parallel worlds of make belief and science.

The acute shortage of both science and technical staff even in our teacher training institutions nationwide is yet another matter of serious concern for our teacher education programme. More disturbing is the fact that not much concrete action is being taken for the accelerated training of these specialized teachers.

The status of the teaching profession is yet another problem of the teacher education programme in Nigeria. The teaching profession has neither been popular nor attractive to the nation's youths. This therefore amounts to an uphill task of "initiating unwilling disciples into the unpopular teaching profession" (Adesina, 1988). Lassa (1995) also observed that "indeed there has been a noticeable decline of interest in education generally and in teacher education in particular". Obioha (1978) explains this situation further that, "the social value system of driving for personal wealth, social mobility and urge for positions of influence are the determinants of people's aspirations now". So in Nigeria now, rather than teaching, most graduates of even tertiary teacher institutions would opt to be taxi drivers, "Okada" riders, shoe/cloth hawkers etc.

Our teacher education programme is also faced with the problem of lack of both scientific and technological equipment on the one hand and the well versed staff in the teacher training institutions to adequately train those who should later cope adequately with the smart and talented computer-age children. Perhaps one of the greatest problems of teacher-education in Nigeria today is that of coping with the spillover of failed educational policies and its products. The government's plan of "Education for all by the year 2000" has been a mere wishful slogan as the "magic year" has come and gone leaving Nigeria with an alarming illiteracy rate of 60.5% for females and 37.7% for males (Classa, 1998) with the failed products of the system re-writing G.C.E and W.A.S.C.E. year in, year out.

The indiscriminate expansion of schools without the corresponding number of qualified teachers and teaching equipment is another problem for teacher education. Almost every state of the Federation has at least two Colleges of Education and a university or two, each with a Faculty of Education in addition to the National Teachers Institutes study centres in every Local Government Area of each state. Obviously, all these teacher training centres cannot be adequately staffed and stocked with qualified staff and teaching equipment in the face of our depleted economy crying for rehabilitation.

People are also allowed to jump into the teaching field as the last hope for survival without regard to their qualification, orientation and disposition. Enyi (1998) observed that in Nigeria, teaching is fast becoming the last hope of the hopeless and a profession for those who have NOTHING ELSE to do. This factor is a great problem for the teacher education programme in our God given country, Nigeria.

Teacher Education and Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

In the words of Buxton (2004) a United Nations Organisation consultant, in a recent B.B.C. radio interview, books are the reservoir of knowledge, morals, culture, science etc. If you toy with books, you are throwing away development, civilization and economic growth. In this light therefore, since teachers are the transmitters of this "reservoir", with a well articulated teacher education programme this "reservoir" can be nursed to produce our dream "development, civilization and economic growth" for self reliance.

Unfortunately, in the midst of the current socio-economic crisis in Nigeria within the context of a global recession, many people have seriously questioned the role of education in our national economic recovery efforts. The efficiency and effectiveness of (the education system have been

subjected to the searchlight of critics who now wonder whether the system is an enabling asset or a liability to the nation; whether it is the education system that has been hampering the economic rehabilitation and development or it is the economic underdevelopment of the country that is handicapping the ability of the educational system to help solve our socio-economic problems. Education according to Ukeje (1977) raises the level of the economic well being of people and hence, nation. The same Ukeje in Enyi (1998) posited that, "the teaching profession is perhaps the most crucial and strategic of all professions for national development". It takes good and dedicated teachers to produce well qualified doctors, efficient nurses, competent lawyers, functional engineers, diligent accountants, good pilots etc. It is through these above mentioned experts, which Egbe (1985) refers to as, "the change agents and generators of ideas that propel the development of any nation" that our nation can be economically rejuvenated - and all are products of the teacher!

Education is not only concerned with the academic growth of the country, but with the totality of national development whose fulcrum is economic rehabilitation. Our new education system is developed and structured in response to man's distinct but diverse survival needs and the demands of the society, which is a buoyant economy. So, through the new system, experts in the different areas of needs of the country will be produced. These experts will in turn, turn around the epileptic economy to a state of excellence for the good of every Nigerian.

The present system is in fact, the solution to our present state of economic quagmire. It is the solution to the hitherto, mass failure, drop outs and half-educated, unemployables as it is expected to produce self-employed and self-reliant citizens through its in-built continuous assessment system which gives the cumulative rather than a terminal assessment of the candidates thus de-emphasizing and de-mystifying examinations.

The new system emphasizes practice over theory so those that pass through the education system are expected to be able to produce one thing or the other. This, will in one way or the other help the people to be self supporting and hence contribute their quota to the economy. This will stop everybody from being a consumer and dependant on other nations products but become producers and self reliant in a buoyant economy.

Combs in Enyi (1998) stated that, "education is both a producer and a consumer of high level manpower as it serves all other consumers of manpower and also constantly recoups enough of its best products in order to further produce other good crops." This process is cyclical, as some products of education become teachers who produce others, who in turn produce more teachers etc ad infinitum. In the words of Harbison and Myers (1984), "there is a positive correlation between composite index of human resources development and the Gross National Product (GNP) per capita". We can now see from this that the products of a system have to develop the system and sustain it for further production and development hence our economic rejuvenation for prosperity.

One of the pre-requisites of national mobilization for economic development-is the fostering of a virile national consciousness. To achieve national consciousness, there must be national integration and the key to national integration is EDUCATION. Allegiance to the Nigerian nation was virtually non-existent although a lot of lip service was paid to it. The new policy on education adequately caters for these lapses through its provisions for "imparting national consciousness in the pupils". The provision for learning, "a local language other than your own" goes further to foster national integration for ease of manpower mobility from one state to the other within the country to help the economy to pick up and grow. The new system also embodies the teaching of a new body of moral

values capable of supporting a modern, secular, scientifically oriented and economically stable society like our dream Nigeria.

Therefore, with the right type of teachers produced through the right programme of teacher education; doing the right type of job by producing the right type of manpower that will variously do operate. We are aware that education is expensive, quality education is more expensive, but ignorance is most expensive. Since we cannot afford ignorance, we must try to afford education through a qualitative teacher education programme, no matter the cost for the unity and economic rehabilitation of the great country Nigeria.

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