

TEACHER EDUCATION: ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL



Theresa Oby Maduegbunam,

*Department of Continuing Education,
Federal College of Education,
Eha-Amufu,
Enugu State.*

Abstract

Teacher Education is the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period, for the preparation of individuals who intend to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens. This paper explains the need for reform in teacher education. The problems facing teacher education in Nigeria, and suggestions on how best to improve teacher education were highlighted among which are professionalization, adequate funding, stepping up the mode of entry into teacher education programmes, recruiting of qualified personnels to handle instructions for better results.

The future of any nation depends on the quality of its education system which in turn depends on the quality of teachers. The maxim that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers and that no nation can rise above the level of its teaching staff shows the role of teachers and teacher education programmes in national development. According to Lassa (1996) “education is the key to national development and only teachers hold the key”. The teacher is therefore the pivot on which every educational development hangs. Supporting the assertion above, Ukeje (2000) in Omeregie (2006) stated that education is so powerful that “it can heal or kill. It can build up or tear apart; it can lift up or impoverish”. He however, adduced that much depended on the type provided and particularly on the teacher who is the hub of the education process. It is therefore expected that only the intellectually promising and qualified persons should be trained to engage in the teaching profession. The nation realizing this has made frantic efforts to produce qualified persons to take up teaching since early 1960s. More emphasis was in the development of teacher Grade II, and the Nigeria Certificate in Education teachers (Omeregie, 2006). This was followed by University degree programmes in Education in the Faculties of Education. Institutes of Education had also cropped up in institutions of higher learning for the training and retraining of

personnel for maximum efficiency and productivity. Finally, the National Teachers' Institute, and Schools of Technical Education in Polytechnics have added to institutions that provide teacher education in Nigeria.

The intention of Federal Government in Nigeria is that all teachers from pre-primary to the University level are professionally trained. Teacher education programmes are structured to equip teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills for the effective performance of their duties, unfortunately, much lapses and inadequacies have plagued the processes of teacher education in the nation so that the desired qualified teachers are not produced. In support of this, Omeregic (2006) pointed out that the present crop of teachers can no longer create desirable changes in behavior of learners. This is due to an expression of public's distress with the perceived inadequacies of our nation's schools to effectively educate our children hence the need for reforms in teacher education.

The Need to Evaluate Teacher Education

The National Policy on Education (2004) states that "Teacher Education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all educational planning because no educational system can rise above the quality of its teacher" (NPE, 2011). It further listed the goals of teacher education as follows:

1. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and effective classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
2. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teacher.
3. To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national objectives.
4. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adequate to any changing situation not only in the life of their country but in the wider world.
5. To enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession

A close study of these goals and objectives of teachers' education in Nigeria reveals that a great deal of effort is being made to evolve a comprehensive pragmatic and enduring philosophy of Nigerian Teacher education. This philosophy on teacher education has great potentials of transforming the society, bearing in mind the role of education as a powerful means of social progress, economic growth and national development.

With these laudable objectives, it would be expected that the products of the teacher education programme would demonstrate academic competence as they carry out their teachings. Unfortunately, the contrary is the case, as Omeregic (2006) observed. Most of the students admitted into our teacher education institutions are

Teacher Education: Alternative Education To Build A Better Future For All - Theresa Oby Maduegbunam

usually the worst academically, better-qualified youths prefer to seek admission into other departments and not education. Many NCE teachers who are teaching in the secondary school today are barely competent. This means that if the foundation of teacher education programme is poor or weak, the products may be of low quality and this will have adverse effect on teacher quality and performance in our educational system.

Anikweze (1995) observed that if there are no good and qualified teachers, there would be no good medical doctors, lawyers, engineers and indeed no other professionals. In comparing the importance of teaching profession with other profession, Ukeje (1991) “if a doctor makes a mistake, a patient may die, if an engineer makes a mistake, a bridge may collapse, when a lawyer makes a mistake, his client may lose his liberty, but if a teacher makes a mistake, it will affect generations yet unborn. “Therefore, if we want doctors who would cure patients rather than kill them, lawyers who would successfully defend the accused in a court of law than plead for leniency, and engineers whose bridge do not collapse, then no investment will be too much to ensure a formidable qualitative education right from the primary school level.

Madueke (1997) stated that since national development has a direct link with education and it is the teacher that translates educational policies, and applies principles and theories in real life practices, it follows then, that the education of the teacher should be the priority of any country wishing to develop in all branches of human endeavour.

Problems Facing Teacher Education

The standard of education in Nigeria is said to be woefully falling, this is nothing more than the falling standard of teaching and learning in Nigerian schools. The standard is reflected on the level of skills and competencies acquired by students; the logic is that, if teachers are poorly trained, they cannot effectively discharge their primary assignment.

The level of preparedness in College of Education in Nigeria should also be looked into i.e. inadequate equipment and facilities for teaching and learning. The poor state of affairs in College of Education was highlighted by the former Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) who lamented that Colleges of Education in this country have been made to look like glorified secondary schools. There are no facilities; the staff is regarded below the tertiary institution staff. So they are disgruntled.

According to Omeregie (2006), it is observed that teacher education programme has some teething problems right from the beginning. Some of the areas:

1. **Mode of Entry:** This is one of the most serious problems plaguing training education programmes in the nation. The NCE programmes in Colleges of Education draw their intakes from less bright secondary school leavers who would in no way get admission into tertiary institutions because of poor academic qualification. The few above average student found in educational institutions are there because they had no admission somewhere else not because they had education as their first choice. In support of this, Igunnu (1994) observed that “Apart from the poor mode of intake into the teacher training colleges, there is still the influx of many unqualified personnel which makes the composition of our teaching force even weaker”.
2. **Lack of Funds:** Inadequate finance from both Federal and State Governments militate against the progress of the Colleges of Education and Teacher Education generally, and this manifests itself in inadequate facilities and equipment. Ngada (2001) identified lecture halls, classrooms, laboratories, hostels, staff quarters, generating plants, office equipment as being inadequate in most teacher producing institutions, this is more pronounced in state owned colleges. It is not better however, in Federal institutions where ratio of students to materials is inadequate.
3. **Haphazard Conduct of Teaching Practice Exercise:** Teaching practice is a cardinal aspect of all training education programmes. According to Ololobou (2003) in Omeregie (2006) it is through it, that teacher trainees operationalise all the theoretical knowledge they have been exposed to in the lecture halls. The supervision of this programme is another area of inadequacy. Some students are supervised only once or twice. Hardly has there been a situation where a student is held behind because of poor performance in teaching practice.
4. **Limited Subject Specialization:** This is especially in the NCE programme where the trainees are trained in two basic teaching subjects. The National policy on Education had fixed the Nigerian Certificate in Education as the minimum teaching qualification in the nation. It means that teachers for primary schools should be the NCE teachers. A teacher in the primary school teaches all subjects to the primary school level.
5. **Imbalanced Evaluation Devices by Teacher Educators:** Anikweze (1995) decrying the poor conduct of continuous assessment practices in teacher education institutions in Nigeria, observed that during the training programme teachers in training are mainly assessed in the cognitive domain, ignoring psychomotor and affective domain.

The implication of all these deficiencies is that all other sectors of the nation are affected. The National Policy on Education (2004) declared that education is an instrument par excellence in achieving national development. For any educational system to be qualitative enough as a tool for national development, the quality of teacher education must be very high. However, the above are some problems facing teacher education in Nigeria. Each level of education whether primary, secondary or tertiary requires competencies and proficiency in order to achieve the educational and national objectives.

Conclusions

Teacher education programme in Nigeria is so important that all machinery should be set in motion toward provision of sound education at all levels of education. For a nation to grow its education must be based on a sound foundation and all facilities needed for enhancing any educational programme should be provided.

Therefore, adequate attention should be given to teacher education in this nation through professionalization, adequate funding, stepping up the mode of entry into teacher education programme, the recruitment of qualified professional teachers to handle instruction for better results.

Recommendations

In order to improve professional growth as well as enhance qualitative teacher education programmes, the following recommendations are made:

1. Teacher education programmes should attract, recruit and retain superior students. The school districts, colleges and universities should work together to develop aggressive recruitment strategies. They should develop early identification programmes to recruit the most promising students into teacher preparation programmes. In other words, there is need to review mode of entrance into teacher education programmes.
2. Provision of funds: Adequate funds should be made available to all teacher training institutions for the Provision of Adequate facilities and equipment. This will enable them carryout the necessary practical so that schools will no longer produce theoretical teachers who cannot apply the knowledge to any novel situation.
3. The Re-visitation of Teaching Practice Exercise: The teaching practice exercise of all training programmes should be intensified and properly organized. A uniform period of one full year of the experience like all other professional disciplines could be introduced. A stipend should be paid to these teacher-trainees while in practice.

Journal of Assertiveness

4. Future Teachers should have a thorough preparation in subject matter discipline. Teacher education student must be tested/assessed in both substance and pedagogy in preparation for certification to document appropriate knowledge in the field of specialization and performance ability in the classroom.
5. Recruitment of Qualified Teachers: Qualified and competent teachers should be given priority in appointments to teach, and in their absence, non qualified and auxiliary teachers should be sent for in-service courses in education to upgrade their qualification.
6. The reform of teacher education programme should occur simultaneously with the reform of the schools they serve. The teacher education programme should not only reflect the need and aspiration of Nigerias but should be geared towards professionalism of the individual teacher. More so, if teacher education programmes are to attract the best students, the conditions of service in schools must be improved.
7. The Teacher should not be assigned outside of the fields for which they are qualified. It is impossible to provide quality education in schools with teachers who are not prepared in the discipline they are asked to teach. There should be no allocation of teachers in fields for which they are not prepared and in which they have not been examined and certified.
8. Accreditation: Colleges of Education should be accredited for the realization of the objectives of teacher education programme for professionalism.

References

- Anikweze, O. M. (1995). Quality control and Continuous Assessment in Teacher Education in Nigeria. *Tambari Kano Journal of Education*, June 1995, vol 23-25
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on Education*. Lagos: NERDC press
- Lassa, P. N. (1996). *A forward in Teacher Education: An imperative for National Development* (ed) Kaduna
- Madueke, M. (1997). 'Skill' Acquisition for youths. A focus on junior Secondary School Curriculum". *Nigeria Journal of Resarch in Education, Federal College of Education, Kontagora, 1(1)*.
- Ngade, J.A. (2001). Probems Affecting Teacher Preparation in College of Education, Gashua of Yobe State. *African Journal of Education Forum, 5(2)*.
- Omeregje, N. (2006). Inadequacies in Teacher Education in Nigeria: The Way Out. <http://ww.idahosauniversity.com/publications> retrieved on 25th July 2007
- Ukeje, B. (1991). The Education of Teachers for a New Order. *Journal of the Nigeria Teacher Today (JNTT) Kaduna National Commission for Colleges of Education, 1(1)*,