LIFELONG EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: THE PERSPECTIVE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper focused on lifelong education vis-a-vis teacher education in Nigeria. Lifelong education can be provided through informal, formal and non-formal education processes. Equally, Teacher education, both pre- and in-service programmes, are offered in the country by different teacher education institutions as declared in the National Policy on Education. However, although commendable efforts have been made, much needs to be done in the context of lifelong education. There should be parity between the regular full-time and the sandwich programmes in terms of entry qualification, course duration and course content, while the in-service programmes should not be commercialized. Teacher education programme requires all hands to be on deck including the governments, teacher education institutions and teachers associations. Innovations, such as, Mentoring, Peer In-Service, Peer-Tutoring, Subject Lead-Teachers and Cluster Lead-Teachers approaches should be adopted so as to afford continuing (lifelong) professional education opportunities to teachers.

Key words: Education, Lifelong Education, Integration, Teacher Education.

Education is a basic right and a key which gives access to other basic human rights such as health, housing, work and participation among others, while also making it possible to accomplish global, regional and local agendas for development (UNESCO, 1997). Education, therefore has value to individuals which brings possibilities to people's lives. It brings about economic well being, enhanced health, encourages self-reliance and entrepreneurships and helps families build better lives and lift their children out of poverty.

Learning is part of human nature because learning is a continuous process. Naturally learning is thought of as something acquired in school but learning can take place in different places. Mazur (2008) avers that learning is acquiring knowledge or developing the ability to perform new behaviours. It is common to think of learning as something that takes place in school alone but much of human learning occurs outside the classroom and people continue to read all through life. This is lifelong education that starts from childhood and continue to adulthood. Children are taught basic academic subjects which they learn in school but they learn a great deal outside the classroom continuously. Mazur (2008) states that learning continues throughout our lives and affects almost everything we do. Adults learn the new knowledge and skills throughout their lives. If older adults remain healthy, their learning ability generally does not decline with age. Learning therefore, is for life.

Human beings consciously or unconsciously keep on learning. In recent times scholars and planners put education in a broader view by promoting the concept of lifelong education. Advocates of lifelong education posit that education is a process that continues in one form or another throughout life. Its purposes and forms are to be adapted to the needs of individuals at different stages in their development (Rashid, 1993). Education is seen as an integral part of life and all the institutions of

society with an educative potential are considered resources for learning. It is that educational process by which individuals become more competent in their knowledge and skills so that they gain more control over their environment.

As the title of this paper indicated, our concern is with teacher education in Nigeria, a country that has since 1977 avowed to adopt lifelong education in her education principle and practice. 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 the need of a society at any point in time. As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, both formal and non-formal sub-systems. Therefore, the design of this paper is historical analysis so as to have a peep into the teacher education policy and practice. Thus, we have to, firstly, have a review of teacher education in the country. Secondly, we have to analyze the concept of 'lifelong education' and its adoption in teacher education in Nigeria. Also, we are to weigh the policy and practice vis-à-vis lifelong education.

The Concept of Lifelong Education

The concept of lifelong education contradicts the conventional wisdom where education is limited only to schools and colleges where children and young people are prepared for adulthood. Also profound implication is that the formal educational system must be reorganized so that it can be flexible enough to accommodate individual options and to prepare young people to continue their education as self-directed and competent adult learners.

The word life centres on definitions that range from political, religious, sociological, historical, anthropological and psychological perspectives Galbraith (1992). Understanding life involves determining how society measures it and views it in relationship to these various perspectives.

Life is composed of the growth and development of human beings that takes place from birth to death" so lifelong refers to life time span. Lifelong education and lifelong learning are being used synonymously to mean and promote successful life.

Dave (1973) has identified twenty characteristics of the concept of lifelong education in his book entitled "Lifelong Education and School Curriculum". Some of these include: the three basic terms upon which the concept is based are "life", "life-long" and "education"; education does not terminate at the end of formal schooling but is a lifelong process; lifelong education is not limited to adult education but it covers all stages of education; lifelong education includes both formal and non-formal patterns of education, planned as well as incidental learning; lifelong education seeks continuity and articulation along with vertical and longitudinal dimension, along with integration of its horizontal and vertical dimensions at every stage in life with the universal flexible character to improve the quality of life.

It is true that citizens acquire education from different settings (formal, non-formal and informal), but the integration of the different settings is fraught with difficulty. To integrate two or three things or systems would mean fusion of the systems so that each will lose its identity or to make each retain its form while still having relationship with others. In either way, it is difficult to integrate sub-systems of education the curricula of which are unknown. For instance, the informal education is unorganized and therefore does not have any identifiable curriculum as to enable people know its content and coverage. The non-formal subsystem is organized as well as the formal. But the non-formal is offered by different bodies for different purposes using different methodologies. On the

other hand, the formal sub-system usually has a well-stated curriculum, which forms the basis for its practice. To integrate two or three sub-systems requires working out equivalences so as to be able to say, for instance, that two-year undertaking in one sub-system is equivalent to one year in another system.

In Nigeria, when one graduates from a three-year National Certificate in Education (NCE) course from a College of Education, he/she enters a university to read Education degree for three years instead of four years. This means that the three-year programme of NCE is equivalent to the first year relevant programme of Education degree in a university. Also, after obtaining an Advanced Level Certificate in the General Certificate of Education (GCE), a candidate undergoes a three-year degree programme in a related discipline in a university. Thus, the integration principle of lifelong education could only be tenable where equivalences have been worked out between formal and non-formal sub-systems.

Therefore, the focus of lifelong education are: there is need to continue learning throughout life; recognition of the formal, non formal and informal subsystems of education as making contributions towards the education of citizens in different settings; integration of education subsystems, democratization and diversification of provisions. Thus for teacher education, different interest and needs should be catered for.

The endorsement of lifelong education by UNESCO which Nigeria is a member formed the basis of the National Policy on Education (NPE), published in 1977, revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. Hence it is declared that lifelong education will be the basis for the nation's education policies (NPE, 2004). In this Policy Teacher Education is assigned a chapter along with other segments.

Goals of Lifelong Education

An understanding of the goals of lifelong education is important. These are based on the ideas of "Learning to Be" and the "learning society". The "Learning to Be" incorporates the goals of learning to think, of becoming a productive citizen, of learning to act and react as a full member of society, but it comprises something greater and deeper than these. For "Learning to Be" involves a process of self-discovery and the achievement of an awareness of our capabilities - as well as own shortcomings.

Because life involves continuous processes of learning, adapting and discovering, so the process of "Learning to Be" is also a dynamic process. One should know more about oneself and one's world. The learning society in which learners participate is also continuous. It does not have a finite bank of knowledge to pass on, it is a society whose stock of knowledge is continuously expanding, being evaluated and updated where the process of learning is as important as its product. An essential attribute, therefore, of an individual in a learning society is the quality of educability, which means to learn and to go on learning. The idea that individuals can go on learning, may choose their own paths to learning. They continually seek to gain more enlightenment and must do all this within a "learning society".

Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher Education institutions started springing up in Nigeria since 1895 when the Hope-Waddel Training Institute was established in Calabar, followed by St. Andrew's College, Oyo, in 1896. The British Colonial administration became involved in teacher training in 1914 when it established one institution in Bonny. In the Northern part of Nigeria one was established in 1909 at

Nasarawa and another in 1921 at Katsina. By 1925 fourteen institutions had been established in the country. Up to 1960 when Nigeria attained her independence many teacher training institutions had been established by the Christian missionary agencies and few by the government to produce Elementary Teachers (Grade III) and Higher Elementary Certificate Teachers (Grade II). Also, there was Grade I Teachers Certificate.

Following the Ashby Report of 1960 which was set up for Post-School Certificate and Higher Education, Advanced Teacher Training Colleges (Now Colleges of Education) were established as from 1962 to produce well-qualified non-graduate teachers to teach lower classes in the secondary schools. When the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) started an experimental B.A and B.Sc degrees in Education in 1960, it attracted severe criticism. However, the UNN blazed a trail because at present there are about 53 Federal and State Universities having Faculties of Education, and about 62 Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. In all these institutions, B.A./B.Sc degrees in Education are offered. Also, for graduate teachers who did not read Education, there is Post-graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) through which such teachers are groomed to attain both academic and professional competence in Education.

There has been a controversy ranging between the proponents of the B.A/B.Sc Education and B.A./B.Sc plus PGDE as which is a more appropriate teacher education programme (Mkpa, 2002). Some institutions favour the B.A./B.Sc Education programme, which combines professional teacher education courses with the courses in a teaching subject simultaneously over a period of four years. But the proponents of the B.A./B.Sc plus PGDE options stress that the other option does not allow for an in-depth study of the teaching subject area. That is, in the bid to combine the two fields depth is compromised. The PGDE option, the proponents hold, allows for an in-depth study of the teaching subject over a period of four years after which one extra year is devoted entirely to professional education. However, the two options are being used in teacher education in the country.

Policy and Practice vis-à-vis Lifelong Education

In the Teacher Education Section the purpose is stated to include production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education system; production of teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment; and, to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. As a matter of fact, the essence of teacher education should be production of intellectually grounded and professionally committed teachers. It is very relevant that the policy realizes that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE, 2004).

However, the Policy contains the phrase 'teacher training'. It should be realized that 'training' means acquisition of narrow mechanical skills. The concept 'teacher education' should be preferred because it reflects production of educators who are academically and professionally well groomed to be able to translate theory of teaching into practice and vise-versa. Hence it is also stated that the curriculum is structured on the components of General Studies (basic academic subjects); Foundation Studies (Principles and Practice of Education); studies related to the student teachers' subject of specialization or teaching subject and Teaching Practice.

Other relevant declarations include free in-service courses for up-grading untrained teachers which the NTI, Kaduna will have overall responsibility for; and that in-service training to be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education. National Certificate of Education (NCE) which is awarded after a 3-year College of Education course has been declared to be the

minimum qualification for teaching in the primary schools. Consequently, many Colleges of Education offer in-service courses towards up-grading grade II teachers to NCE for the primary schools. These courses are differently tagged sandwich or part-time programmes. The NTI has been alive to its responsibility over part-time or sandwich programmes. Its distance education programmes make use of the print (written text) and the electronic media (radio, television and video tapes) towards successful offering of in-service teacher education in the country (Aghenta, 1992). However, there is doubt over the successful use of the electronic media in the face of constant power failure all over the country.

Teacher education, both pre-and in-service programmes are being offered in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics with different tags, such as, distance education, sandwich and part-time.

Even the interest of the country over knowledge and skills of teachers could be seen through the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (1993), duty of which includes:

determining what standards of knowledge and skill are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers…and raising those standards from time to time as circumstances may permit: classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.

Although, commendable efforts are being made on teacher education in the country, both pre- and in-service, yet there are many problems. Adesina (2004), decry the non-cooperation of the governments (Federal and States) with teachers undergoing in-service courses. Aghenta (1992) and Mkpa (2000) identify the shortcomings in the sandwich B.A./B.Sc Education programmes versus the full-time programmes to include, entry qualification, course duration, reduction in the scope of course content, commercialization of examination grades, constraints of expensive handouts which must be bought by students. Based on the shortcomings of the sandwich programmes, for instance in the B.A/B.Sc Education degree, Aghenta (1992) suggests that a body should be set up to streamline and harmonize them with full-time programmes; each university senate should take a critical look at the sandwich programmes and tighten up the entry requirements, lengthen the periods for completing the courses and enrich the course content to ensure parity between the full-time and sandwich programmes. Hence the NTI model should be emulated.

Lifelong Teacher Education Model

The features of lifelong education include vertical integration meaning education throughout life.

Thus, the objectives of teacher education should include cultivating in the teachers the attitude of continuous learning. In-service programmes in the forms of seminars, workshops and conferences should be seen as a priority so as to offer teachers opportunities to refresh their knowledge and skills after the initial pre-service education. Fadina (2004) suggests that more on-the-job and in-service training should be provided to raise the standard of teachers in Nigeria. Olude (2004) sees in-service training as a veritable means of keeping teachers in Nigeria up-to-date in their areas, and as a lifelong education process for improvement of the teachers and the educational system.

Teachers' attendance to in-service programmes should be seen as a necessity while governments (Federal and States) should see it as their responsibility to support teachers financially and morally.

Mkpa (2000) suggests innovations in the in-service programmes in Nigeria to include:

✓ **Mentoring:** This is strategy in which highly experienced teachers in a school are assigned a number of less-experienced ones to serve as their mentors or professional guides. This is like the Peer In-Service Approach (PISA) which is a self-help in-service approach that drastically reduces the cost of financing training programmes for teachers within local government areas. Thus, the expertise of good/experienced teachers is utilized to up-date other teachers in neighbouring schools in the same area (UNESCO, 1997).

✓ **Peer-Tutoring:** A colleague approaches the other to obtain or seek professional assistance or guide on any aspect of his/her discipline where he/she is defective. In this way, the area of professional competence of each colleague benefits the other eventually leading to each member of staff growing academically and professionally.

✓ **Subject Lead-Teacher Approach:** A Senior Teacher of the same subject leads the other teachers, overseeing all curricular programmes associated with that subject.

✓ **Cluster Lead-Teachers Approach:** Teachers in selected schools in a Local Government Area (five or less schools) come together to share experiences in certain subjects. A very good teacher in a particular subject leads the others. This cluster enhances mutual assistance among themselves, hence self improvement without necessarily going to any training institution.

In addition to these strategies, the different subject-teacher and discipline associations' conferences, workshops, and seminars should be encouraged on local government, state and national bases. Usually, at these gatherings experts are invited to give talks after which the topics are elaborately discussed by all members.

Another feature of lifelong learning is horizontal integration, which means linking education and life. Horizontal Integration refers to the need to foster education in non-formal as well as formal settings. The advocates of lifelong education believe that it is intolerable to have a situation where education secured in formal settings result in better status than those that are gained in non-formal, let alone informal settings where one secures few credentials and no status. Teachers and student teachers should be made aware that much education takes place in the society outside the formal subsystem. This awareness will enable teachers integrate or link up the school education with that of the out-of school. This integration involves bringing the society into the school and also bringing the school into the society. For instance, relevant resources in the society should be brought into the school to bring more reality and boost classroom teaching. Workshops, arts galleries, agricultural establishments and industrial set-ups in the society should be used to interact with the formal school teaching. Students' practical teaching exercises should not be restricted to the formal classrooms, but should be extended to the out-of-school settings. Thus, the teachers will link school education with life in the broader society.

Another dimension of lifelong learning is pre-requisites for learning. These may be defined as opportunities, motivation and educability – a degree of efforts being essential to both motivation and educability. It means having the disposition to continuing to learn or learning-how-to learn so as to enable one to be an autonomous learner. Aghenta (1992) recommends the NTI model of distance education with the students reporting to their teachers every weekend.

Emphasis should be placed on the use of the library and news media (print and electronic) to acquire knowledge. Continuous assessment and self-assessment should be stressed so as to enable students monitor their achievements while undertaking independent educational pursuits. Thus, lifelong learning becomes a tool for lifelong education.

Integrations as Dimension of Lifelong Education

Lifelong education implies two types of integration. It implies horizontal integration, that is a bringing together of all the types of education being provided within the society, in school and out of it so that they can support each other; and it also implies vertical integration, that is the articulation of various types of education made available to individuals throughout their lifetime. There is a need to integrate these arms so that all educational efforts are made complementary: and also integration' of all means to maximize resources and to avoid costly and overlapping of efforts.

The task of achieving satisfactory horizontal and vertical integration is difficult but not impossible. In this respect the isolation of school from what goes on around it, from what has happened before and what will take place afterwards is particularly regrettable. Indeed the length of time that a child spends in formal school can cut him off from his community. In the light of this concept of integration, current attempts to delimit areas of formal, non-formal and informal education would seem inappropriate. Teacher Education can be viewed as a blend of opportunities from the most formal to the least informal depending on a number of variables such as how far it is planned, who provides it, where it is provided and the kind of reward system it offers.

The task of achieving integration involves both promoting a dialogue between all those agencies involved in setting goals and providing educational opportunities, and devising policy machinery to transform the results of such dialogues into action.

But the possibility of achieving integration rests on the willingness of human' beings to accept it. There must be mutual understanding. It is equally important that the users of educational services should themselves be consulted especially. Integration of different forms of education cannot be achieved without bringing changes in the nature and structure of the institutions, which provide it.

Conclusion

Lifelong education is a form of education which covers the whole of the individual life in one or other way. As it is declared in the National Policy on Education that lifelong education will be the basis of education policy and practice in Nigeria, the most effective way to achieve this intention is through teacher education. Consequently, among the purpose of teacher education is to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment. In the country, regular fulltime and in-service, part-time and sandwich programmes are offered. But there is need to streamline, integrate and harmonize the full-time and the part-time/sandwich programmes so as to ensure parity in entry qualifications, course content and course duration. In addition, governments, teacher education institutions and teachers professional associations should join hands in teacher education so as to offer opportunities to teachers to constantly update their knowledge and skills through different innovative approaches.

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