

# REPOSITIONING TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

*Chiseh Suleman Yerima*

## **Abstract**

This paper examines the current status of teacher Education in Nigeria It discusses in detail the several attempts of the government to ensure that the country produces adequate teaching personnel for all levels of education It further discusses the challenges of teacher Education for the N.C.E. College The paper further highlights current status of teacher education for the production of secondary school teachers. It suggests ways and strategies for improvement and repositioning teacher education in Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

### **Who is Teacher?**

UNESCO (.1958), defines teacher as, person directly engaged in instructing group of pupils (students). Head of Educational institutions, Supervisors and other personnel's should be counted as teachers only when they have regular teaching functions.

Fanfuwa (1989), says the term teacher should cover all those who impart knowledge and skills in formal and non-formal situations ... the foreman aeromechanics, managers administrators etc.

Having defined who a teacher is, what then is teaching?

Teaching is a major vehicle for education and it is perhaps the most basic of all social phenomena. In this connection, it may make sense to regard every social interaction that induces learning and behaviour change as teaching.

Teaching is a complex and of guiding the learner through a variety of selected experiences to bring about worth-while changes in behaviours. Teaching also connotes a lot of other meanings if used without verification; it could refer to a human action. It involves relationship based on interaction.

Teaching could be said to be a social function that aims at guiding desirable growth in others. Teaching is a notable profession because it has the characteristics of other profession that is to say it is a means of livelihood, which is jealously guarded by those who belong to it. Usually, it sets standard for admission of new members and prescribes code of ethics for retention of its members. Like in other professions, teachers all over the world have professional organization. In United State of America, the teacher's organization is called National Association of American Teachers (NAAT). In Britain, it is the National Union of Teachers (NUT) while in Nigeria; it is known as Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT).

### **Teacher Education Today**

From the ongoing, teachers' education is so vital to the development of any nation that the Federal and State Government in Nigeria have embarked on several teacher education programmes. The origin of Nigeria's present system of education can be traced to the national Curriculum Conference, which was held by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) in 1969. The conference was meant to examine past educational goals and to identify new ones in line with the needs of the people of Nigeria. It focused on all levels of Education, teacher's education inclusive, For the first in history of Nigeria when her Citizens initiated and planned a Conference which was meant to give direction to our system of Education.

At the Conference, participants which included educators, teachers, administrators, businessmen, traders, farmers, industrialists and civil servants, evolved a national philosophy of education.

The national goal of Nigeria were specific- These are the building of;

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A great and dynamic economy
4. A united strong and self-reliant nation, and
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all Citizens.

## **Current Status Of Teacher Education In Nigeria**

In terms of social esteem, academic excellence and professional rating, the current state of teacher education, in Nigeria is very low. This is, however, attributable to a number of factors including apparent confusion in the implementation of some recent innovations in teacher education in the country.

In Nigeria today, there are two acceptable levels of pre-Service teacher education programmes. These are the N.C.E. Programmes and the first degree Programmes. The first degree programmes are basically two types: the concurrent degree programmes and the consecutive degree programmes. The concurrent degree programme in which the teaching subject and education are studied concurrently lead to various degrees designated as B.A. (Ed), B.sc. (Ed), B.Ed. This is the source of problem. The consecutive programmes lead to a degree in a teaching subject plus a diploma in education. We shall return to this later.

## **Programmes For Teacher Education**

Teaching is a service Profession. Everywhere and at all levels, it has its requirements, techniques, its rewards, and a times its frustration. Much depends on the quality of teacher education programmes. Some people hold that teachers are born. This may be partially true. But we hold the view that teachers are both born and made. This is so because teaching is both an art and a science. Some aspect of the art of teaching may be innate, but the science of teaching has to be cultivated.

As a person, a good teaching must be adaptable, flexible, dependable, co-operative, considerate, enthusiastic, forceful, honest, industrious, open minded, refined, and resourceful. He must have a breadth of knowledge, good health, leadership qualities, and scholarship. In the classroom, a good teacher should not only be able to transmit knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently, he should also be able to inspire his pupils or students to greater heights of achievement. As a member of a group or community, he must meet the needs of the individuals and the community of which he is a part. Indeed, he must have a broad educational background; he must possess adequate and sound professional knowledge; and be a sound scholar in his teaching field of specialization. He should therefore, be well prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

## **The Primary School Teacher Education Programme: The Nee Programme**

In our education system, the primary school teacher normally teaches all the school subject in his class. The teacher at this level must therefore, have sound knowledge of these subjects for effective performance. Historically, N.C.E arose from the report of the Ashby Commission on post school certificate and Higher Education in Nigeria (1960). The report actually recommended a two-year teacher education based on the school certificate for the production of what the report termed Grade 1 teachers (Ashby, 1960s, p. 16). The Grade I certificate was then attained by holder of G.C.E. (Advance level) in two subjects after five years of Grade I certificate plus passing a course leading to a certificate designated as the Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E). This was made and designed for the production of what was then called "well qualified Non-Graduate teachers". Such teachers were to teach in the upper grades of the primary school and the lower grades of the secondary school. However, in practice, the products taught and are still teaching at all the grades of the secondary school and only very few are found in the primary school. Today quite a number of the states of the federation have less than 20% of their primary school teachers as N.C.E holders.

If the N.C.E is to be the minimum qualification for entry into teaching profession, then strategies and programmes must be devised to effectively make the N.C.E the minimum qualification for all primary school teachers with effect from the year 2000. This will of course, imply that N.C.E teachers should teach only in the primary school.

The problem, however is that the current N.C.E programmes in the Colleges of Education are, at best, suitable for the production of Junior secondary schoolteachers only. They are neither suitable for teaching at the primary school level nor at the senior secondary school level. The revised minimum standard for the N.C.E; produced by the National Commission for College of Education makes provision for:

- i. Two Teaching subjects or a double major
- ii. Education (Theory)

- iii. Teaching practice
- iv. General Studies

But as we have already observed, in the primary, every teacher is currently supposed to teach all the subjects on the curriculum for his class. The current subjects on the primary school curriculum include:

- i. English Language
- ii. Mathematics
- iii. Health and Physical Education
- iv. Social Studies
- v. Moral and Religious Education
- vi. Fine Arts
- vii. Home Economics
- viii. Agricultural Science
- ix. Science.

Clearly, therefore, the current N.C.E products, with at most two teaching subjects and 12 credits of general studies, are not adequately prepared for primary school teaching. Most of them muddle through the teaching of all the subjects on the basis of their secondary school knowledge. This is clearly unsatisfactory. What is more, some of them did not even study some of the subjects at the secondary school levels. This is simply an act of cheating rather than teaching. In this regard the grade II Teachers are even better prepared to teach in the primary school than the current N.C.E teacher's, this is because the grade 11 teachers curriculum covered all the primary school subjects. Thus the current status of the N.C.E. Teaching Education Programmes in the Colleges of Education is that they are grossly unsuitable or inappropriate for this Century or 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges. Apart from the obvious inadequacies of the programme already identified, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges of the primary school teacher could be repositioned in the following ways.

- i. Acceptable level of knowledge and understanding of all the primary school subjects,
- ii, A higher level of knowledge and understanding approximate to that of a second year University course in one academic discipline.
- iii. Computer literacy to be able to function effectively in the information technology age;
- iv. An educationist with sound knowledge of child growth and development, measurement and evaluation, teaching strategies and methodologies.
- v. A broad view of man and the world with emphasis on social, economic and political institutions and their interactions.

#### Teacher Educations For The N.C.E. College

The challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century also required effective and efficient teacher educators for the College of Education. Where specified, the N.C.C.E Minimum standards have recommended first degree holders with at least second class (lower) division and with teaching qualifications as the acceptable minimum qualification for College of education lecturers. We strongly feel that this is not enough for the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. We therefore, recommend the following minimum qualifications for lecturers in colleges of education.

1. M.A./M/SC., with teaching qualification or M Ed as lecturer II.
2. , B.A/B.Ed. (Ed/B.Ed with at least second class (upper) division as assistant lecturer on probation to be sent out for training after one year of successful probational service.
3. The provosts or chief Executives of the Colleges of Education Should hold the P.M.p. degree in Education or in a Teaching subject but with professional qualifications.

.. Those Colleges of Education that are University degree awarding should have provosts who are professors with teaching qualification. All in all, every academic staff of a College of Education, including the provosts, must be potentially qualified. The formal educational qualifications herein recommended for all the staff of the College of Education are informed the fact that Nigeria is not particularly rich in library facilities or educational publications for informal education to expand their horizon. These recommendations on staff qualifications are the minimum standard which are imperative for

repositioning teacher education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century if we are serious about standards and quality education at all levels.

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges and Strategies for Repositioning Teacher Education**

If the child is the center of the educational system, teachers are the hub of the educational process. For it is upon their number, their education and training their quality and devotion to duty, their effectiveness and efficiency, their competence and their productivity, depend on the effectiveness, the capability and the possibilities of the entire educational system and enterprises. The realization of the potentialities of organized education as a veritable instrument for social change and national reconstruction depends largely on the teachers. Excellent educational policies are meaningless unless there are equally excellent teachers to see their realization. Various government may vote sufficient funds as enabling resources for education, adequate material resources may be procured, but unless the teachers are properly prepared positively motivated, little productivity will happen. The enabling resource will be wasted, the materials resources will gather dust and decay and little productive education nation will take place.

We have always maintained that for a developing nation like Nigeria, teachers are the most crucial, critical, vital and strategic professional group for national development and reconstruction, We have maintained that this is so because if a doctor makes a mistake, a patient may die; if an engineer makes a mistake, a bridge or a physical structure may collapse; if a lawyer makes a mistake, somebody may lose his liberty, but if a teacher makes a mistake, generations yet unborn may suffer the consequences. In other words, the mistakes of members of the other professions are not debilitating and devastating to the future generation as the mistakes of the teacher.

For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the secondary school teacher must be adequately prepared to face the challenges of the age; scientific knowledge is said to be doubling every seven years, so the teacher of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must have a good knowledge of his subject and the world around him as well as being current in teaching strategies. He must maintain at least parity in knowledge and esteem with the members of other professions.

Specifically, we hold that the secondary school teacher of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must have the same parity of esteem with the medical doctor. While the medical doctor is primarily concerned with man's mental and physical health, the teacher is largely concerned with man's intellectual emotional and spiritual health.

In fact, far more than the doctor, the teacher affects the future. Indeed the teacher affects eternity. For instance, the average teacher, before retirement, would have affected the lives of as many as 20,000 people. For as the teacher so is the taught. In the educative process, we can possibly manage without adequate classrooms and other facilities, we can educate without books and other aids; but we cannot without the teacher. He is central and paramount in the educative process. It is said that, if education unlocks the door to modernization, progress and development, it is the teacher who holds the keys to the door.

This is why, as we have often maintained that is a national suicide for any nation either by accident or by design, to allow its best brains to cure its sick, design and build its roads and bridges, formulate and administer laws while its poorest brains teach its youth. We cannot accept the epigram, which states that those who can't do, teach and those who can't teach do. Both teachers and teacher educators must be those who can do and can teach. It takes good and dedicated teachers to produce efficient doctors, competent lawyers, functional and creative engineers etc. Therefore, the education and training of teachers should particularly be for the challenges ahead.

Finally, let it be stressed once more that no nation can raise above its educational system and that no educational system can rise above its teachers. Capable, dedicated, competent, effective and efficient teachers, at all level, are indispensable for our success and progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The problem is enormous, and the challenges are stupendous, and our future survival may be unbalance, unless we take appropriate actions now, tomorrow may be too late.

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