

ASSESSING QUALITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION: A PANACEA FOR ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND RELIANCE

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Abstract

This paper examines the concept of Teacher Education, the objectives of Teacher Education and the place of quality assessment in Teacher Education. The paper believes that education for Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance could not be achieved in the absence of good and competent teachers in the classroom. Hence, there should be more emphasis on 'quality' rather than quantity in our entire Teacher Education programme in this country. The paper ends with a number of recommendations.

Introduction

In a developing country like Nigeria, teaching can be regarded as the most vital and strategic profession for national development (Ukeje, 1991; Oyekan, 2000). The teacher is the pivot of the educational process. Thus, the mistakes of the teacher are more devastating to the future generation than the mistakes of the members of any oilier profession. It is generally accepted that education unlocks the door to technological development and national development of any country but it is not often realized that is the teacher who holds the key to the door. Therefore, according to Ukeje (1991), the education of the teacher should be an issue for serious national consideration and attention.

Teacher education should equip the teachers with good assessment practices, as this is the only way by which quality could be maintained in our schools. In fact, no meaningful economic rehabilitation and reliance could be achieved through the teaching-learning process without good classroom assessment practices (Bande, 1993; Oyekan, 2000). It is highly disheartening today that one of the greatest problems facing Nigerian educational system is that of the recruitment and retention of competent people into the teaching profession. Teacher Education is so vital for the future of any nation. It is through sound teaching-cum-evaluation of learning outcomes that we can experience economic rehabilitation and reliance. To have good teachers we must have good educable materials. This is so because education anywhere and everywhere must attract and retain high caliber teaching personnel in order to improve its quality and productivity (Ukeje, 1991; Oyekan, 2000; Bande, 2003).

The Concept of Teacher Education

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 (Oyekan, 2000). It is informed by the fact that teaching is an all-purpose profession, which stimulates the development of mental, physical and emotional powers of students. Such educated citizens would be sensitive and equipped with the imaginative resourcefulness to promote sound health, equality, peaceful co-existence environmental management and democratic process (Oyekan, 1994).

In Nigeria today, a large number of qualified teachers who are well trained, flexible and willing to teach is required to cope with the bright, slow and average students. They should be sufficiently exposed to well-planned academic subject, professional educational courses, principles of test construction, assessment practices in the classroom and teaching practice imbued with ethics of teaching profession. Such well-trained and well-groomed teachers in Nigerian classrooms should be equipped with professional artistry and scientific process of adjusting education to the changing needs of the children and their environment.

Therefore, in order to produce competent and reliable teachers with the desirable qualities, teacher education programme should be competency-based (Osho, 1991; Ukeje, 1991; Jatto, 1994; Oyekan, 2000). In assessing quality in Teacher Education programme, the following criteria should be used:

- (i) **Knowledge Criteria:** This is to assess the cognitive understanding of the teacher-to-be.
- fii) **Performance Criteria:** To assess the teaching behaviour of the teacher-to-be.
- (iii) **Affective Criteria:** This specifically deals with -the degree of the teacher-to-be/pupil interaction in the classroom.
- (iv) **Evaluation Criteria:** It relates to the teacher-to-be ability to teach effectively by assessing pupils' behaviour adequately in the classroom to determine academic achievement.

The Objectives of Teacher Education

The purpose of Teacher Education is to produce well-qualified professional teachers that can" adjust to the changing needs of the students and development prospects of the modern society (Oyekan, 2000). In specific terms, the objectives of the Teacher Education as stipulated by the-National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004), are to:

- (i) produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of our educational system;
- (ii) encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- (iii) help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- (iv) provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world; and
- (v) enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.

Therefore, Teacher Education programme is expected to equip teachers with the appropriate professional knowledge, teaching skills and methods, guidance-based evaluation techniques, and ethical orientations for effective performance of their duties within and outside the school system. Hence, the teachers will become potent agents of social, economic and political development in our quest for economic rehabilitation and reliance.

The Place of Quality Assessment in Teacher Education Programme

The evaluation of students' progress and ultimate level of achievement in schools is a very important part of any educational system (Banta, Black and Oblander, 1996; Kniveton, 1996; Muffo, 1996; Cornwell, 1997). Neither the teacher nor the pupil can perform with maximum effectiveness unless adequate information is available concerning the student's standing at any given time and the extent of his progress toward the achievement of instructional objectives (Stephens and Izard, 1992; Bandele, 1993; Grimison, 1993; Thorton, 1995; Bird; 1995; Badmus, 1997). According to Badmus (1997), the teacher and the pupil need such information: the teacher, so that he can adapt the teaching process to the needs of the students; the pupil, so that he can set his own immediate goals and be motivated to set new goals as the instructional sequence proceeds. Administrators, counselors and parents also need relevant information concerning pupils' progress in order to plan effectively for improving the learning environment of the total population and individuals within that population for whom they may have special responsibilities. So, is the development of an educational system in which the child is recognized as an individual reacting with and contributing to his ever widening environment, the importance of student's evaluation cannot be over-emphasized. Hence, there is the need for good classroom assessment.

Assessment in the classroom refers to the mechanism of deducing the extent to which instructional objectives have been achieved in the class (Bandele, 1993; Bybee, 1995; Akpan, 1996). Instructional processes are designed to foster desirable characteristics in learners. These processes are usually formal and do take place in the classroom where the teacher lead learners to learn.

Hence, educational assessment ought to be accorded prominent place in a good Teacher Education programme. However, the history of teacher's incompetence in educational assessment had been well documented over the years (Mayo, 1967; Goslin, 1967; Stanley and Hopkins; 1972; Ebel, 1975; Gullickson and Hopkins, 1987; Frisbic, 1988; Lambert, 1989; Bandele, 1990; Berber, Paris, Evans and Gadsen, 1992; Cox, 1993; Karim, 1993; Kolawole, 1998; Abbas, 2000; Oladunni, 2000). The incompetence includes inappropriate assessment practices, inability to approximately

apply assessment techniques in evaluating students' learning, assessment information not properly communicated to parents/guardians, irrational grading practices and failure to analyse scores among others.

Hence, it should be noted that quality assessment occupies a central position in any meaningful Teacher Education programme, as this will enable us produce:

- Competent teachers
- Teacher that will be able to assess pupils adequately in the classroom with the aim of rehabilitating slow learners and improving on his teaching methods, so that the school could produce graduands that would be able to contribute meaningfully towards the economic rehabilitation and reliance in this country.

Assessing Quality in Teacher Education Programme as a Means of Economic Rehabilitation and Reliance

Economic rehabilitation is a way of mending battered or poorly managed or mismanaged economy. Reliance talks about the self-sufficiency of an economy at least to some extent and not necessarily depending on another country for survival in every ramification. These we want to achieve in Nigeria through education. However, teaching profession in Nigeria is regrettably denigrated with many untrained, poorly trained and incompetent teachers. Infact, Oyekan (2000) wondered how these crops of teachers of poor quality that have flooded the secondary schools today managed to get to our classrooms? This group of pseudo-professional parasites in any educational system should be periodically identified for guidance and counselling, retraining or retirement.

However, such poor quality teachers ought to have been identified during training at the teacher training college or university and shown the way out with the presence of good assessment techniques in our Teacher Education programmes. A good assessment technique will differentiate good students from bad ones. If there were good assessment techniques in our Teacher Education programmes, majority of the teachers teaching in our secondary schools today would not have succeeded in securing teaching certificates. Hence, good quality assessment in Teacher Education programme will genuinely prepare quality teachers who will be able to teach students effectively and efficiently in the classroom. Students in the classroom will then be able to receive sound education needed for economic rehabilitation and self-reliance. But it is disheartening to note that many of the teacher-trainers do not possess the basic skills of text construction. Hence, the government should make it compulsory for all teacher-trainers to undergo at least a diploma course in test and measurement as this will enable us produce qualified assessors that will be able to produce competent and reliable teachers

It should be noted that only competent and reliable teachers could produce students that will be able to contribute positively towards the economic rehabilitation and self-reliance, which is the majors, aims that Nigeria, as a country wants to achieve through education.

Who then is a Good Teacher?

A good teacher is he who leads learners to learn. Hence, a good teacher according to Ukeje (1991), must be adaptable, dependable, cooperative, considerate, enthusiastic, forceful, honest, industrious, neat, open-minded, refined, resourceful, have breadth of knowledge, good leadership qualities and should not only be able to transmit knowledge and skills effectively and efficiently but he should be able to assess learning outcomes effectively to determine academic achievement.

Researches (Ukeje, 1991; Osho, 1991; Jatto, 1994; Oyekan, 2000) have shown that a good teacher is he that knows:

- (i) what to teach and how to learn it;
- (ii) the nature of the human organism i.e. how learning takes place and what motivates behaviour;
- (iii) how to evaluate the individual, to make an educational diagnosis and to help students develop desirable traits;
- (iv) how to work with small and large groups of people of varying ages;
- (v) how to help students think critically and independently;
- (vi) how to help students to be ever more eager to find out knowledge i.e. to be more

- inquisitive; and
- (vii) how to help students to become more conscious of their own values that can make them useful to themselves and the society at large.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

- (i) Teacher education curriculum should be reviewed to meet the present-day challenges of the Nigerian child,
- (ii) More courses on assessment techniques should be introduced into Teacher Education programme to equip teachers adequately for the challenges ahead.
- (iii) Emphasis should be placed on 'quality' rather than 'quantity' in our Teacher Education programme.
- (iv) Only competent teachers should be allowed to teach in the classroom.
- (v) -The government should encourage teaching profession through good salary package. (vi) Teachers-to-be should be knowledgeable in principles of test construction,
- (vii) They should be able to interpret scores.
- (viii) They should be able to use assessment results to rehabilitate poor students,
- (ix) Teacher education programme should be competency-based.

Finally, if all above recommendations were religiously considered, the Nigerian teachers would be able to act as an agent of economic rehabilitation and reliance. It should be noted that education for economic rehabilitation and reliance couldn't be achieved in the absence of 'competent' teachers in our various classrooms.

Conclusion

The teacher should be able to teach effectively in the classroom and ensure efficient learning, conceptual understanding and academic achievement. Hence, Teacher Education programme should embrace meaningful evaluation techniques to determine quality. Only competent teachers can lead learners to learn. Emphasis should be placed on 'quality' rather than 'quantity' in our various tertiary institutions where teachers are being trained. Meaningful economic rehabilitation and reliance cannot be achieved in this nation in the absence of 'competent' teachers in our classrooms.

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