QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Bukoye Jide Musbau and Tijani O. Abdulgaffar

Abstract

This paper examines the place of teacher education within the context of national productivity. It is stipulated that quality teacher education remains the basis or fundamental for meaningful socio-economic and political development of the Nigerian society. It is in recognition of this that the paper highlights some of the challenges militating against the performance of teacher education in this global and modern economy and puts forward strategies it considers necessary for its effective performance.

Education is a powerful tool for social economics and political change. It is a means of liberating the minds of the entire citizens and a source of poverty alleviation. It is based on this that quality education at all levels became a fundamental right the citizens. Thus, any nation that plays with the education of her teeming population is directly or indirectly breeding hunger, diseases, and socio-political instability. Moreover, the success or failure in the education sector heavily lies on teachers and teacher education programme. Therefore, quality teacher education programme would ensure quality in all sector of the Nigerian economy. However, as important as this level of education is, it has been fairing well. How do we improve the system to ensure national productivity and what challenges are needed to be removed? These form the centre focus of this paper.

Teacher Education Programme

The term teacher education can be viewed as a formal process of making the teacher truly professional by acquiring the right pedagogy from a relevant recognized body that is charged with the responsibilities of training effective and efficient teachers. Bulus (2010) sees teacher education programme in Nigeria as an attempt made to provide quality teacher for all sub-sectors in the education sector which appears to be ill equipped. Accordingly, Paul (2010) conceptualizes teacher education as “policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their task effectively in the classroom, schools and wider community”. Teacher education is divided into three categories:

1. Initial teacher training/education (a pre-service course before entering the classroom as fully competent teacher).
2. Induction-the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school.
3. Teacher development or Continuing Professional Diploma (CPD). This is an in-service training for practicing teachers. (Willipedia, 2009).

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) provides framework to adequately equip teachers for effective classroom performance. Thus, the following institutions are saddled with the training and development of teacher education programme provided they meet the minimum requirement

a. Institute of Education/Faculty of Education in the universities so designated.
b. Colleges of Education.
c. Department of Education in the Polytechnics.
d. National Teachers’ Institute, Kaduna (NTI).

From the foregoing, teacher education is perceived as any conscious programme that is designed to provide qualitative and quantitative teachers to man the Nigerian school system at all levels. Thus, teacher professional development would go along way in effecting positive attitudes, skills and worth-while orientation the Nigerian citizens required for productivity.

National Productivity

Productivity is an economic term frequently used in industrial sector for production of goods and services for the consumers. Traditionally, productivity is visualized by Paul (2010), as the
relationship between output and input used to produced goods and services. The key ingredient of productivity includes efficiency, effectiveness and quality service delivery. Otoabasi (2009) asserts that productivity is typically the rate at which a worker, in establishment or institution produces goods and the amount processed compared with how much time, work and money is needed to produce them. According to him, productivity may be conceived of as a measure of the technical efficiency of production. As such qualitative measure of input and sometimes output, are emphasized.

Considering the above expositions, it is obvious that the concept productivity is indeed of economic origin. However, it is applicable to social and technological life of a given nation in which teacher education falls. Therefore, productivity occupies the central nerves of a meaningful national growth and development of any society.

**Determinant of National Productivity**

There are many factors determining a nation’s productivity level. There is quality education, technological capability of the nation, labour force, viable economic policy, etc. Of all these factors, the quality of education according to Paul (2010) stands out as a critical determinant of nation’s growth and productivity. Without any doubt, it is the commutation of the impact of quality education in all sectors of Nigerian life that is referred to as “National Productivity”. Therefore, teacher education is a potent instrument for ensuring human productivity.

**Quality Teacher Education. What does it Entail?**

More often than not, people talk about quality so much that one does not know what really constitute quality in the education industry. The reason has been that what one perceives as quality education may be contrary to other peoples’ idea of the term. This assertion made little in Igwe (2004) cited by Dimson (2009) to describe quality in education as “elusive”. He goes further that some parents considered it to be the schools with qualified teachers and enough facilities to offer quality education. It could be seen as the ability of educational system to fulfill its goals. In academic circle, it could be described as the ability in reading, writing and arithmetic. According to UNESCO in David (2010) qualitative education is seen as “making the abstract real and developing the capacities of individuals and societies to work for a sustainable development”. To achieve qualitative education according to David (2010) the following products of qualitative education must be embraced and utilized. The summary is presented below:

1. Creativity: This involves the use of our skills and imaginations to produce something new or a work of art.
2. Innovation: This is about introducing new ideas and ways in order to make things better. Creativity and innovation are two branches of imagination.
3. Reduce examination malpractice: This means avoiding or ignoring all forms of cheating to excel in examinations
4. Poverty eradication: This occurs when there is qualitative education delivery which can develop the capacities and makes real the abstract in an individual, community, society and nation. Others include reading habit, dignity of labour and pride.

Having stated this, quality teacher education within the context of this paper connotes that the articulated aim of teacher education is merged or matched with adequate achievement mechanism which should be measured in the quality of the school products to an appreciable level of mastery of certain competence and skills. The mentioned achievement mechanism are as follows

a. Curriculum content: How rich is the curriculum and to what extent does it reflect societal aspiration?

b. What types of educational system is in operation?

c. The calibre of teachers: Are there quality teachers for teacher education programme to implement the curriculum to the letter?

d. What levels of commitment do these teachers’ possess?

e. What about the institutional factor such as administrative, facilities, admission process, assessment, etc?

f. To what extent are the teachers motivated for excellence performance?
What about the readiness of the learners to learn or acquire knowledge and skills required in a diverse labour market? etc.

It is the reflection of the above that is culminated in quality education and teacher education programme. The question one needs to ask at this juncture is “Does Nigeria possess the above in her educational scene and to what extent is absent of one or two of these component greatly affect her educational standards? These are the issues that need appropriate attention if education must serve as an agent of social transformation.

**Quality Teacher Education: The Major Determinant of National Productivity**

The term quality may be defined as the degree of excellence or level of value in a product ‘or a grade of achievement or standard against which to judge others or the degree of worth or fitness for purpose (Dimson, 2009). Quality could be seen as the uniqueness that makes something stands out when compared with others. Quality teacher education is a recognised transformational tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment. Thus, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) declares “No education can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The type of education received by the citizens of any nation is predetermined by the quality of teacher education programme. Teacher education plays pivotal roles in transmitting the national goals and aspirations in to the recipient which is inturn, imparted into the learners in and outside the classroom. Because it occupies a place of pride in the scheme of events in Nigerian educational system, its impact in national productivity cannot be underestimated.

Teacher education equips the teachers with sufficient and adequate knowledge, attitudes and worthwhile technical know how with a view to effect positive change in the lives of the students. This desired change therefore, is meant to prepare the learners at all level of educational attainment to be useful and productive members of the society and make substantial contributions to the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria. The curriculum of teacher education programme is carefully packaged to ensure productivity in the learners. Thus, appropriate courses in guidance and counselling, citizenship education, language and communication skills, curriculum and instruction, measurement and evaluation, business education, technical and vocational education, computer application, etc serve as value added to national productivity which the Nigerian society needs for her active involvement in the committee of the developed nations.

If education is a human right which influences economic stability and active political participation by the citizens, without any doubt, teacher education would continue to possess social relevance in the whole spectrum of national productivity. Furthermore, quality teacher education produces competent teachers for the school system which is saddled with the responsibility of producing work force in the Nigerian economic sector. Bye and large, quality teacher education would ensure enlightened and stable democratic process characterised by love, mutual understanding, peaceful co-existence, free and fair electionery process which are of inestimable value to a stable economic development.

**Emerging Challenges in Teacher Education**

Quite amount of praises have been showered on the Nigerian teacher education as an instrument for social change. However, one cannot loose sight on some challenges confronting its operation. Although there has been an exponential growth in teacher education institution, For instance, Akinbote (1999) stipulated that “Nigeria today has one of the largest teacher training systems in Africa with 53 federal and state universities having faculties of education; and 67 colleges of education and polytechnics. Colleges of education have risen from only 6 in 1976 to about 72 presently all together producing about 40,000 NCE graduates on an annual average”. Despite this commendable stride, the following challenges are noticeable in the system:

**Gross Inadequate of Teachers**

Availability of teachers at the various levels of educational system is a matter of concern. Thus, the carrying capacity of a class is far more than the prescribed student teacher ratio of 1:40.
The situation is even worst at both primary and secondary level where more than 100 students are packed in a class. The implication of this therefore is the problem of classroom management which manifests itself in poor teaching and learning. Dagunduro and Sulaiman (2010:10) averred that “an average classroom in the primary school contains 70-100 pupils at a given time. This adds stress on the school personal and classroom management”

**Inadequate Training for Student Teachers**

It has been observed that the teaching practice which is generally considered as the heart of teacher education programme has been subjected to little or nothing. Anikweze (1991: 4) asserts that;

> It has been observed that students teachers receive inadequate attention from either cooperating teachers in placement schools or their college or university supervisors. In most case, regular class teachers in the placement schools abandon the classrooms for student teachers as soon as they arrive for teaching practice, there by affording the later no opportunities to learn some teaching skills from such teachers. The end result of the poor preparation of teacher candidates is that many of them are not able to give their pupils quality education after the completion of their courses.

Similarly, the education sector status report also notes that there are complaints that the teachers produced by the part-time and sandwich programmes mounted by both the universities and colleges of education in the country can barely write an assignment (Federal Ministry of education, 2003). Although, this report does not include the National Teachers’ Institute Kaduna programme, the personal experience of this author reveals nothing to be desired in the time frame and instructional quality as well as quantity.

**Low Status of the Teaching Profession**

This poises alot of threat to teacher education and teaching profession at large. Thus, the best brain that could have been useful in the profession has opted out for more respected and lucrative jobs. Furthermore, if given the choice, at least 90% of the students will indicate their less desired for teaching because of the way the society perceives teachers.

**Poor Condition of Service for Teachers**

It is obvious in Nigeria that the salary of teachers is nothing to be desired compares to other socially recognized professions like doctors and lawyers. In many cases, teachers, especially at the primary education level have to struggle to get their legal salary with alongated industrial action. Accordingly, Ikeotuonye (1994) in Bulus (2010) lamments thus “in our teachers, we have sown inferiority complex, low self-esteem, dissatisfaction, bitterness, hunger, nakedness and other thing that is demeaning. What should be expected in return?” The resultant effect is poor quality education for the Nigerian child.

**Examination Malpractice**

This remains a monster in educational value in Nigerian institutions. Students generally have poor reading culture, as a result, the only alternative for passing examination is through cheating in any form. It is not an over statement to say that every body is involved in this act in one way or the other, parents, teachers, administrators, supervisors, principals, etc. This ugly situation has untold implication on the quality of assessment which in turn affects the educational standards.

**Recreating Teacher Education for Productivity**

To recreate, means to create atmosphere, style, etc, for something that existed in the past (Hornby, 2006). Recreating teacher education for productivity therefore, focuses on the removal of certain obstacle considered as highly inimical to its performance. Thus, Livinus and Reginald (2009) believe that “recreating teacher education will necessitate a shift in public attitude, a fundamental recognition of the sector and a different view of the teachers’ role”. The underline principle of this recreation suggests that maximum attention be given to the following areas:
Adequate Funding

There is need for the Nigerian government to adequately fund teacher education programme based on its socio-economic and political relevance. Therefore, the UNESCO directive of 26% annual budget to education sector should strictly be met and duly monitored through effective supervision of the institutions to which the fund is disbursed.

Teaching Practice Exercise

Teaching practice exercise that is the heart of teacher education programme should be given proper or adequate attention it deserves. Isaac and Tijani (2009) stipulate that it is indeed a point of concern that teaching practice that forms the basis of teacher education has been bastardized or reduced to nothing by the leadership of both universities and colleges of education because of their failure to provide satisfactory fund to the lecturers to carry out this noble exercise. Based on this exposition, there must be a change of attitude of all concerned administrators, lecturers, students, cooperating schools and their staff to effectively execute this vital programme for teachers’ productivity.

Training and Development of Teachers

This should be given adequate attention. Therefore, the sandwich programme mounted by the various colleges and universities especially the part-time programme of the National Teachers Institute (NTI) must be looked into and repackaged. Apart from the structure and quality of this programme, Tijani and Muhammad (2009) view the three months per session contact during the course of study as grossly inadequate and ridiculous for teacher preparation. As such, this arrangement sacrifices quality for quantity. They therefore consider this as “mere money making venture”. Something must be done to arrest the situation.

Condition of Service

Among the problems confronting teacher education is insufficient remuneration. Paul (2010) opined that low teacher motivation is often reflected in apathy, lack of commitment and relatively high labour turnover. Thus the teachers can hardly give their best under this situation. Condition of the Nigerian teachers today has nothing much to be desired. Unless something reasonable is done, their productive capacity will become undesirable.

ICT Literacy:

A major challenge facing Nigerian teachers is the phobia for computers. For an enhanced teacher quality, the teacher must be empowered in information and communication technology; and be able to use and apply ICT tools and materials. This should be an essential part of pedagogical courses. (Paul, 2010).

Conclusion

The paper has discussed in details the issues involved in quality teacher education for national productivity and the challenges that need to be tackled in the Nigerian educational system. There is therefore need for urgent government attention as well as all stakeholders in the education industry to collaborate and ensure qualitative education for the Nigerian children who have been adjudged as the leaders of tomorrow. Hence, quality teacher education remains inevitable. Teacher education must be revitalized to possess social relevance in order to salvage the Nigerian society from abject poverty, hunger and diseases and engender peace, social progress and foster national development in all angles.

Recommendations

Based on the challenges confronting teacher education as identified in this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1- Government should recruit qualified teachers to cater for the population explosion in our various institutions of learning and ensure 1:40 student teacher ratio.

2- Effective monitoring mechanism should be put in place by the government to ensure quality preparation of teachers in the respective teachers’ training institutions in the country.
3- Regular workshop should also be organized for the teachers in service by the Government in order to enlight them on innovations in teaching and learning.

4- Government should also make teaching profession very attractive through the provision for good condition of service for teachers.

The above will go along way in enhancing teacher education in Nigeria for better performance.

References


