

Reforms in Education: The Need for Re-Engineering Teacher Education for Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The paper is concerned with reforms in Education and the need for re-engineering Teacher education in Nigeria for better professionalism and National Development. In the process, key concepts like Teacher Education and professionalism were explained. A brief review of the state of Teacher Education and Development in Nigeria revealed the challenges to Teacher Education and Development. Various reforms in Education that warrant re-engineering of the teaching profession were highlighted. The paper stressed the need for improved teacher Education in Nigeria. We also identified strategies for improvement of Teacher Education and Development in Nigeria for better professionalism and the overall national development. The paper finally made recommendations for improving Teacher Education. In conclusion we observed that the most important action any nation can take to improve her education is to strengthen the teaching profession in terms of subject matters, development of new skills, training and values.

Key words: teacher education, professionalism in education.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and emerging technologies are greatly transforming every society including developed and developing countries. Nigeria is not left out of the race, for she has set for herself vision 20-2020 whose ideals are aimed at making her one of the largest economies in the world. She has also adopted National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) as a home-grown response to these global reforms in the social and economic context. Education has been recognized as playing a fundamental role in empowering nations to attain these Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

It is in this regard that the Federal Republic of Nigeria, National Policy on Education (2009) had long recognized education as an instrument per excellence for economic and social reconstruction. She further stated that no education can rise above the quality of its teachers and that teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. From the foregoing, education has been viewed as an instrument for national development and this can be achieved in a situation where only trained and qualified teachers are engaged to handle the process of education. Good school education as Luka and Ishaya (2014) have noted is the product of good teaching and the success of a classroom teaching depends largely on the personal qualities of the teacher and his/her professional competence. A well trained teacher is therefore a possible tool for effective national development. In a similar note, Obanya,(2007) stressed that Education is the key to sustainable human development. He further opined that Education is not determined simply by what politicians promise and what policy makers develop. It is not determined simply by what educational philosophers speculate about, and on what theorists propound. Rather it is dependent on what teachers do, which include the way they organise learning opportunities and empower the learner. It also depends largely on what the learners are able to take from the learning-teaching situation. Thus it can be logically argued that the quality and effectiveness of an educational system depends on among other factors, the competencies and resourcefulness of its teachers and it is hinged on their continuous professional development to meet the changing needs of their learners in particular and the society at large. It has however been observed by Luka and Ishaya,(2004) that events in recent times have shown that public school teachers in Nigeria have not adequately been equipped with pedagogical skills needed to facilitate quality instructions in the classrooms. In the following section of this paper, we shall explain the key concepts in this work.

THE CONCEPT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Teachers are recognized worldwide as transmitters of knowledge, skills and values to learners at all levels of education system. In his views, Obanya (2007) observes that teachers have traditionally been regarded as professionals that impact positively on learners, on schools and on the larger society. He went on to conclude that teachers make or mar an educational programme. In terms of Teacher Education, Akinola (2010) sees it as a form of education that is designed to groom those who teach or would like to teach or be engaged in relevant professional services in our schools, colleges and ministries of education. In the past, teachers' training was used to describe the preparation of teachers. In the present times however, the use of teachers training has been replaced by Teachers Education. The former is limited and narrower in scope and depth while the latter is a broader view of teacher education. Teacher education is a much more systematic and all-embracing concept. This is why the essence of teacher education is seen as to provide teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge and competences they require to enable them do their job well and thereby making significant impacts on the education of school children. In doing so, development can be attained. Oyekan (2006) is of the view that the purpose of teacher education is to produce well qualified professionals who can adjust to the changing needs of the students and developmental prospects of the modern society.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2009: 42) has identified the following as the goals of teacher education in Nigeria:

- a) Producing highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- b) Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- c) Helps teachers to fit into social life of the community and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- e) Enhance teachers' commitment to teaching profession.

The goals of teachers' education as highlighted above indicate the importance Nigerian government attaches to Teacher Education and the need to promote and develop Teacher Education for the individual and national development. In essence if teacher capacity development is enhanced, they will keep pace with rapidly changing demands occasioned by the rapid transformation that the world is going through, as these transformations will always affect both the goals of education and the professional role of teachers as well as the intellectual and technical demands on teachers.

THE CONCEPT OF PROFESSIONALISM IN EDUCATION

A profession is a job that needs a high level of education and training. This includes the legal, medical, and the teaching profession. Dodo (2014) views a profession as a paid occupation especially one that involves prolonged training and formal qualification. He explains further that it is a job in which its members acquire a body of knowledge on which their work is based. Members of a profession always develop a sense of belonging and responsibility, assure an attitude of moral concern towards client and join together in association to advance the occupation and control its members conduct through established code of conduct or ethics.

Other characteristics of a profession have been identified by Emeh, and Ogaboh (2010) as; the provision of specialized social services, possession of specialized knowledge through a prolonged period of training, code of ethics and a kind of control over the quality of membership, high degree of autonomy for individual practitioners, and for occupational group. Emphasis is laid on services rendered to society rather than economic or financial gain of practitioners, high social status, reward and recognition by public and professional associations, which usually, is a self governing organisation of practitioners.

Over the years, Dodo, (2014) has pointed out that there has been a great controversy as to whether or not teaching is a profession in Nigeria. His observation maybe correct to some degree because most of the characteristics of a profession as highlighted above are lacking in the teaching profession in Nigeria. It is for this reason that Obanya, (2007) stressed that the solution to professionalizing the teaching profession lies in recognizing teaching as the specialized profession that it should be. He argues that in supporting such recognition there should be appropriate regulatory processes for the education, certification and continuous professional, intellectual and personal development of practicing teachers. It is obvious then that the teaching

profession can hardly develop itself to meet the demands of rapidly changing times until it becomes, and is accepted and recognized as a special profession.

TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

In the Nigerian education system, Teacher education is carried out by

- a) The faculties of Education of Universities
- b) Institutes of Education of Universities,
- c) Technical education programmes of polytechnics,
- d) Colleges of Education
- e) The National Teacher Institutes (NTI).

The Federal Government of Nigeria, National policy on Education (1981) stipulated that the new minimum qualification for primary school teacher is the National Certificate of Education (NCE) as against the Grade II Teachers Certificate T.C.II. Obioma, (2013) has noted with dismay that there are still a preponderance of holders of Grade II Certificate in some states till date. These untrained teachers in the system cannot make significant impact on the academic life of their students not to talk of contributing to the development of the nation.

Again, presently in primary schools, teachers are assigned to teach individual classes. In this way, a classroom teacher is expected to cope with 11-12 subjects as was obtainable in the old system. Obioma, (2010) has further noted that this practice has persisted to date, thus producing the so-called NCE holders who cannot cope with the demands of primary school teaching. This is the issue of a square peg in a round hole because pre-service teachers in colleges of education mostly read education courses and majored in two subject areas. These group of teachers are unqualified to teach at the primary schools. It shows that the innovation at the primary school level was not replicated at the teacher education level.

At the Junior and Secondary Schools levels it has been observed that although teachers here are trained in their teaching subjects, they are ill-motivated and often lack the zeal in teaching. Obioma, (2010) has further noted that most of them elected to teach as a last resort and they are often the residuals from the population of applicants that wish to proceed to higher education. As a result, they are admitted with very poor pre-qualification results. This same problem is also replicated in the faculties of Education. This situation leads to low motivated teachers who have little interest in the teaching jobs. There is also a dearth in qualified teachers in technical colleges. This is as a result of the acute shortage of pre-service teachers in the technical education programmes of polytechnics and colleges of education (technical). In most cases even when the pre-service teachers graduate, they elect for other more lucrative and rewarding jobs than teaching. This has no doubt led to under-development in Nigeria's technical advancement.

Other problems in the education system include teachers' poor salary conditions of service, absence of regulated and well streamline teacher development framework unlike other professions. Also in-service training and capacity building aimed at improving service delivery are often regarded as a favour and privilege. Similarly, when service-teachers gain experiences through these opportunities they are not backed up by rewards such as promotion, enhancement of status, or other related privileges, as obtainable in other professions.

These catalogue of problems weigh down on the teachers; professional development. There is also improper implementation of innovations in teacher education by the authorities concerned as well as political will to support the programmes by institutions responsible for training teachers.

REFORMS IN EDUCATION THAT WARRANT RE-ENGINEERING OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The many reforms in Education globally and in Nigeria call for the need to reform and reposition teacher education and profession. They include;

- a). The formal adoption of the 9-year Basic Education programme through the enactment of UBE ACT of 2004. This led to the introduction of Basic Science and Technology and computer studies/ICT in the primary education components.

- b). Introduction of French as a compulsory subject for primary 4.
- c). The infusion of such new emerging issues as Vocational and Technical Education, HIV/AIDS Education.
- d). In the new curriculum structure for the 3-year Senior Secondary Education which now incorporated 34 trade/entrepreneurship subjects.

The question now is, have these reforms in the curriculum made any impact on Teacher Education Programmes? The success of these innovations lie in crucial issues of producing qualified teacher to teach the new curricular. From the above exposition, there is need to re-engineer the teaching profession and teacher education especially at level of capacity building.

STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONALISM IN NIGERIA

Onyaka, (2006); Obanya, (2007); and Obioma, (2013); in their contributions have noted that:

*There should be a window for specialization at the degree level for teaching in the primary and junior secondary levels.

*There should be a shift in the way classroom transaction should be organised and managed.

- The pattern of rotating specialist classroom teachers across streams of classes should be put in place as is done in most countries presently.
- The education and profession of every teacher needs to be seen as life-long task. This can take the form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of Practicing Teachers for ensuring quality instructions in Nigerian schools.
- There should be government policy interventions.
- There should be social engineering to enhance societal perception of teaching.
- Enhanced career prospects for the teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for Nigeria to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and be counted among the league of developed nations, she must seriously develop her teacher education because there will never be quality education without quality teacher education to adequately deal with the numerous reforms in our education system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Quality of entrants to teacher education programmes is imperative.
- The teacher education programmes should be enriched with the infusion of ICT and Computer programmes.
- Teacher education programmes should be expanded through outreach programmes and distant learning.
- Teachers conditions of service should be improved.
- Efforts should be geared towards the Professionalization of the teaching job.

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