

The Challenges for Teacher Education in the Twenty-First Century

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Abstract: Any discussion on teacher education is as relevant as discussing human life. Education is undoubtedly life. And no educational system can grow above the quality of its teachers. Teachers, therefore, as educational engineers and directors are the soul of any educational system. Thus, the economic, political, social, technological and even the cultural survival of any nation depend on the spirit and the quality of its teachers. This is true, because there is no substitute for teachers that are committed to their job and dedicated to their nation and their pupils. In clear term, the future of any nation rests in the hands of its teachers, for the qualities they possess today will inevitably reflect in the citizens of tomorrow thereby enhancing a virile society not only for self-sufficiency but equally for self-dependency. This study discusses elaborately the challenges for teacher education in the 21st century by examining the concept of education which is the 'key change' agent, problems facing teacher education especially in Nigeria, conditions for admitting students into teacher education and the attendant problems, the programme of study, the recognized institutions for teacher education and professionalising teaching for quality education and the anticipated result of such endeavour.

Key words: Challenges, teacher education, cultural survival, educational system, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

The survival of any nation depends on the quality of its Education and the quality of education relies on the quality of the teachers. Thus, the highest goal of education should be man's search for himself in a constantly changing world, where he is continuously called upon to make choices that will definitely influence his environment in a positive way. Education naturally is concerned with the unfolding of the individual as a whole in the particular and peculiar environments and circumstances, which he finds himself. Teachers are recognized as the pivot of any quality education, this is why they need to be respected, honoured, trained and retrained to maintain the dignity of the profession and retain the quality of the educational system. Education is not schooling as some people erroneously assume although schooling is educational, it is undoubtedly a necessary condition for education but not a sufficient condition. As a necessary condition, the classroom manages as teachers are referred to deserves analytical appraisal for the survival of the quality Education in the 21st century. It is an undoubted fact that Teacher Education is presently being faced with so many challenges which need appraisal ranging from identifying the concept of education problems of teacher education especially in Nigeria, conditions for admitting students

into teacher Education, the programme of study, recognized institutions for teacher education and professionalising teaching for quality education.

The concept of education: Education, all over the world is an instrument of change, as an engine of change people approach its definition from different angles, whatever approach given whether real, normal, analytic, genetic descriptive, persuasive e.t.c. It is still coming down to revealing that it is the totality of experience in response to nature and the environment. This is related to O; Connor's assumption that the educational system of any society is a more or less elaborate social mechanism designed to bring about in the persons submitted to it certain skills and attitudes that are judged to be useful and desirable in the society. Etymologically, education has two Latin words *educare* which means to bring up a child, physically or mentally; and secondly *educere*, meaning to lead forth or draw out.

Looking beyond the etymological roots to the genealogy of the concept, we find that education is a member of a class of concepts describing certain process such as teaching, learning, training, instruction, indoctrination and so on. The 2 roots identified above are involved in one or the other of these processes. The anticipated result of these processes is generally referred to as an educated man. Such a person is expected to have

mastered certain skills, to be cultured and above all, to possess a trained mind. If education is to fulfil these crucial role. What do we do to those who are in charge of the inculcation of the knowledge, skill and attitudes that are desirable and worthwhile?

Inculcation of knowledge becomes an inevitable target that a teacher aims at in his professional duty. In the understanding of the role of knowledge in educational discourse, it is necessary to ascertain a few landmarks in the logical terrain of the concept. This terrain however includes terms like belief, opinion, understanding, evidence, proof, truth, fallacy, certainly, possibility and of course reason. In this terrain knowledge, of a certain type occupies a pre-eminent position such that whereas belief, opinion or conjecture may be true or false, knowledge must be true, since if it is to pass as knowledge, it must be bogged on adequate evidence. But the type of knowledge that can be categorized as true is sometimes referred to propositional knowledge as distinct from dispositional knowledge. This concerns the distinction between 'knowing that' and "knowing how" that is the distinction between knowledge of facts and knowledge of skills. The relevance of all this to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives is not tangential but crucial, more so when we bear in mind the pre-eminence of the cognitive domain in the context of the taxonomy. Nevertheless, whether we are dealing with propositional knowledge or with dispositional knowledge the question of adequate evidence is a vital consideration. This is why before a belief could be classified as knowledge it has to be tested, verified, validated and found to be true. The teacher in his professional duty has to recognize this fact.

Value of education: Has education any value that warrants or calls for the adequate training of those expected to be in charge of its inculcation? Education is undoubtedly value oriented. The value in education is underlined by the fact that each society establishes an educational system designed to serve its present and future needs, that is to say, to serve as an instrument for stability on one hand and as an instrument for change and renewal on the other hand. Thus, in every such system, the transmission of knowledge, skills and values which the educational institutions impact are those of the larger society and as a matter of fact, the morality of the school is a reflection of that society which the school is a part. The school is managed by teachers for quality education. In fact, the quality of any education system depends very much on the competence, commitment and motivation of the teachers.

PROBLEMS FACING TEACHER EDUCATION

Teacher education is facing a lot of perennial problems especially in the 3rd world countries and particularly in Nigeria. Youths develop apathy to teaching since to them; it offers the least attractive prospect as a career. Thus, many take teacher education as a stepping-stone for further education. That is why, the believe is that instead of staying at home, doing nothing, why not teacher education, pending the time the real admission for lofty career would come, this is unbelievable, but it is still happening in Nigeria and other 3rd world countries.

Another problem is the retention of teachers even while in the job. Most students in our faculties of education cannot be said to be satisfied in becoming professional teachers on graduation hence many of them struggle to have a degree that would pave way for them in sectors other than teaching. It has reached an embarrassing stage in many 3rd world countries that even university-trained teachers prefer clerical position with their secondary school certificate. Teaching has reached a ridiculous level in the 3rd world countries, to the extend that it is classified as endangered profession, except a radical improvements are injected into teachers' service condition, the integrity of the profession would continue to degenerate or even decay. The radical improvements being suggested are in the area of higher remuneration, more pleasant working environment, greater recognition to participate in policy-making on education, greater opportunities for promotion, robust retirement benefits and other attractive benefits that are found in other professions.

Inadequate funding is another serious problem facing teacher education in most African countries. It is an undoubted fact that quality teacher education are affected by poor infrastructural facilities, poor equipments, unstable industrial relations, a poor reading culture as a result of hostile environment, examination malpractices and even anti-social activities like cultism all actually hinge on poor funding of teacher education. The poor funding however affects the quality and the standard of certificates awarded. To revive and redeem the image of teacher education in 21st century adequate funding should be made available and well supervised. The idea raised above corroborate's Lassa's (1992) opinion that adequate funding and timely release of approved financial allocations to institution of higher education constitute a formidable determinant of educational quality. To sustain standard therefore teacher education institutions should be encouraged to look inwards for legitimate alternative sources of funds to supplement government subventions without compromising standards.

CONDITIONS FOR ADMITTING STUDENTS INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

To be trained a rather to become a trained teacher in the 21st century, the would-be teacher must possess the necessary moral, intellectual and physical qualities and must have the required professional knowledge and skill. Watt (1989) is of the opinion that the status of teachers in the teaching profession is closely linked with the criteria for admitting students into the profession, she is right in the sense that to go into medicine profession in Nigeria for example, the candidates so to be trained must possess a high level of rudimentary knowledge in the natural sciences of Biology, Chemistry, Physics and even Mathematics, the same is applicable to law that attracts a high level of rudimentary knowledge in literature in English, Mathematics and other art subjects. Watts (1989) equally suggests that a high standard of teacher education should start with placing a high value on the admission criteria of those “most” likely to be excellent teachers. She therefore gave some criteria to be considered for admitting students into teacher education and traits to develop during the teacher education programme. Watt (1989) enumerated the traits as follows:

- Orientation and willingness to change.
- Knowledge and ethical values.
- Communication-interpersonal relationships and professional rapport, information technology and language skills.
- Decision-making in the classroom, in the school system and in the community.

In the United Kingdom, Wilson (1989) asserts that to admit candidates for teacher training was based on a requirement that applicant should be seen in a face to face situation and a recognition that certain personal qualities and characteristic were more desirable than others.

In Nigeria, admission into Teacher’s Colleges were based on passes in some related subjects and qualifying examination but political factors is not excluded especially for the sake of quota system, federal character or educational disadvantages considerations. Although, educationists like Nwana (1993) expressed reservations about the impact of the political factor in Nigeria’s admission model. The main problem with Nigeria’s admission is the inability to detect the interest of the candidates since majority of the promising ones are making the training a stepping stone towards another fascinating jobs.

Indeed, the recruitment and retention of competent teachers has been one of the greatest problems of teacher education in Nigeria as in other parts of the world. As Ukeje (1991) succinctly put it:

The recruitment and retention of competent people into the teaching profession is a perennial problem all over the world. But the case of Nigeria is particularly serious and disturbing. We are reaching a point where teaching is fast becoming the last hope of the hopeless, that is, the profession for those who have nothing else better to do.

The question to ask is whether the statement made by Ukeje in 1991 is still the case in Nigeria today? The answer is in the negative, things are changing, professionalism and professionality are gradually taking their roots unlike the period when Ukeje wrote.

The programme of study: As far as Teacher programme of study is concerned in Nigeria, certain areas of study are of paramount importance. Teachers in Training undergo courses in:

- General studies (GST).
- Professional studies, mainly elements of philosophy and sociology as applied to education, history of Education, psychology of Education, Comparative education, school administration, Guidance and Counselling, Adult Education and methods of teaching the various subjects and educational technology.
- Studies related to the students intended field of teaching.
- Teaching practice.

All the above listed programme, according to Balogun (1988) are the Universal pattern of teacher education programmes aimed at producing ‘a good teacher’. At the various level of teacher education in Nigeria, this pattern is strictly adopted, monitored and controlled by bodies specifically set up for the purpose, examples are National commission for colleges of Education (NCCE) for National Certificate in Education (NCE) programme and National University Commission (NUC) for B.Ed degree programmes

REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In preparing institutions for teachers education, the following requirements are of paramount importance.

The environmental requirements such as physical and infrastructure facilities, Task and method conditions, personnel conditions in terms of student’s characteristics and teacher qualities, competent and adequate staffing is a necessary condition. Teacher Educator must be

professionally qualified for the job. Their sense of mission, vision and dedication and commitment to duty should be positively high.

McDonald asserts that teaching is rooted in the teachers own moral purpose and interests. Teachers teach what they do and as they do, at least partly from a deep and often tacit sense of mission... Thus, if the sense of mission of teacher-educator becomes warped by social and economic circumstances the standard of their performance is bound to deteriorate, degenerate and finally decay.

In terms of facilities, every teacher-educational institutions should as a matter of necessity, have the basic physical facilities that give existence to the institution such as lecture rooms, administrative blocks laboratories and workshops, hostel accommodation and gymnasium. There should be provision of essential facilities such as water, light, health facilities, standard library all which are necessary conditions for the training of good and sound teachers. This corroborates Abdulkadir (1991) assertion that:

The issue of quality of education does not stop on setting minimum academic standards and setting up high entry admission requirements and high cut off points... but also in improving the conditions under which the students both and outside the classroom are made to learn.

The learning environment for the would-be teachers must be conducive and democratic in nature. Equally important is the fact that teacher-educator should teach as they were taught; the commitment of their onerous task of moulding future professional teachers is one way of ensuring a high standard of teacher education.

Professionalising teaching for quality education: Professionalisation of teaching implies that any person who would be licensed to practice the job of teaching must be professionally trained, certified and licensed for practice as obtains in other recognized professions like medicine law, engineering etc. It is believed that professionalisation will improve the quality of teachers as well as enhance their image and status in the society. However, a necessary corollary of professionalisation is the necessity to extend the period during which the student teacher has to learn the practical job of teaching to a point near perfection before he/she is giving the certificate. Therefore, thorough teaching practice becomes a necessary condition for this purpose. Its organization and conduct will determine the standard of practical experience acquired by the student-teachers. Supervision by both institution-based supervisors and school based

cooperating teachers is directed towards improving the quality of the practicing teacher. Modern techniques of teaching like Brainstorming, Lecturettes, resource persons and microteaching are carried out during the teaching practice exercise.

Equally related to professionalising teaching is the organization of in-service courses for teachers to update their knowledge and improve teaching standards. The in-service training is designed to secure systematic improvements of the quality and content of education and of teaching techniques, it also prepares teachers for new tasks and wider responsibilities. One of the greatest challenges for teacher education in the 21st century is professionalising teaching not only for qualitative teacher education alone but for a qualitative education in general. The qualitative education in this sense is one which has the ability to equip its human products with desirable knowledge, skills and attitudinal behaviours to make them good persons in themselves, good citizens to their country and the world at large.

As a matter of fact the future of any nation depends on the quality of its educational system while the quality of any educational system depends largely on the quality of its teachers for the development of any nation, qualitative education is desirable and for the realization of this, teachers need to be adequately trained, motivated, highly respected and publicly honoured.

Consequently, the professionalisation of teaching is a sine qua non in the attainment of qualitative education. Thus, the provision of quality and qualitative education become a great challenge for the teachers in the 21st century. The most significant request in teacher education is that teachers generally seem not to have respect for their job. In the consequent of this teacher-educators in the 21st century should make sure that teachers in training and even those on the field should be proud of their profession. One would expect to see a day when a teacher like other professions add to his/her name Teacher John, or Teacher James as it occurs in profession like Medicine, Engineering, Law etc. In all ramifications, anywhere, anytime, teachers should be proud to introduce themselves and declare the social acceptability of their job. One would not know what operates locally in other parts of the world but in Nigeria and most African countries, Teaching at present has not been approximated a profession having failed to possess the well-known characteristics of a profession.

CONCLUSION

This study has been able to position that teachers are the main determinant of quality education that enhance national development. It also reveals that if

teachers are apathetic, uncommitted, uninspired, lazy, unmotivated and immoral the whole nation is not only doomed but finished. If, teachers are also ignorant in their areas of specialization thereby imparting wrong information, they are not only useless but dangerous. As a matter of fact, this study has been able to establish that teachers should know more than what they are going to teach and the best method of teaching it, teachers should go on learning, so that their mind may be fresh and active and that they may inculcate love of learning in their students. The 21st century teachers should be made to realize that their attitude of friendliness, fairness and politeness to the children and at the same time their firmness, uprightness and dignity are indispensable qualities they must have if they are to discharge their duties truly. Teachers' prestige will normally command obedience, but if, in addition, they show evidence of accurate knowledge or do well in their areas of specialization, students are such hero-worshippers that they will have an immense admiration for them, thereby enhancing a retentive memory which would encourage them to recall whatever they are taught on demand or request.

The 21st century teacher education should develop the teacher into a well integrated person, somebody who is socially stable, morally dependable, mentally and physically alert, intellectually honest, economically efficient, scientifically literate, professionally equipped, nationally and internationally oriented and culturally adjusted and infact should be computer literate with sound knowledge in Information Communication Technology (ICT). Therefore, the envisaged qualitative

teacher education is the sum total of qualitative input, process, outcomes and most importantly quality of products of these components, a good teacher who is knowledgeable, skilled with good behaviour and capable of imparting knowledge to the young ones, would definitely improve the society and make it better. And offcourse he is a psychotherapeutic force within the classroom.

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