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SKILL ACQUISITION AND TEACHER EDUCATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Dr. Nwaham Caroline Obioma

Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the impact of teacher education on skill acquisition. Teacher education has been viewed as the type of training or education given to student teachers to enable them impart knowledge effectively to the learners. In the process of training, the student teacher needs to be equipped with the principles, methods and skills to enable him fit into the classroom situation. For this goal to be achieved many factors must come into play. They include: provision of adequate funds, availability of infrastructural facilities, provision of qualified teaching manpower, introduction of new methods of teaching, admission of qualified candidates into the teacher training institution. The paper recommends among others, provision of adequate funds and facilities.

Introduction

Education is the springboard to socio-economic growth and development of every nation. It prepares an individual to live in a dynamic or constantly changing society and contribute to such changes and constantly promote the survival, growth and development of the society.

Education is the most powerful instrument in the world because no nation has ever attained fame or a particular height in terms of development without education as its bedrock, which is engendered by sound educational ideals. Thus Onwumere (2006), saw education as the springboard for sociopolitical, economic and cultural development that enhances the production of skilled manpower for national development. The/loadable goals of education cannot be achieved in the absence of well trained, knowledgeable, skillful and highly motivated teachers.

As stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004), no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, teachers are the hub around which the education system rotates. They are the key instruments in achieving sustainable national development. Teacher education is the fundamental form of education that should be functional, solid and concrete in all ramifications in order to meet the current challenges of the individual and the nation at large.

Okere, (2007) stated that there is high increase in the demand for education at all levels in Nigeria due to the increased awareness of its importance, increased population and need for critical skill for survival in the



society. Thus, there is urgent need for more qualified teachers to bridge the gap between the high growing student population and the number of qualified teachers in the education system. It is a known fact, that the quality of teachers determines the standard of education in any country and the standard of education determines the level of sustainable development, hence there is need to train skilled teaching manpower that can effectively handle the educational system in the country.

The Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is that type of formal education which prepares people to become qualified and competent teachers. Teacher education depicts a conscious effort geared towards the production of individuals with commitment for human capital production. The training of teaching manpower takes cognizance the inculcation of skills and competencies in human management as well as upholding the tenets of the profession.

Denga (2001) opined that teacher education is the process of preparing developing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills that will enable them to effectively direct learning situation. Nwana (2006) saw teacher education as the aspects of education which produces teachers through professional training.

Okafor (1988) saw teacher education as the formal systematic and organized training programme geared towards the production of a crop of required teaching manpower.

The Goals of Teacher Education

Federal Government of Nigeria in National Policy on Education (2004) stipulated the following as the goals of teacher education:

1. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of educational system.
2. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
3. To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
4. To provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adapted to changing situation.
5. To enhance teachers commitment for the teaching profession The policy also stipulated that the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE); that all teachers shall be professionally trained; that all teachers shall continue to take cognizance of changes in the methodology and in the curriculum. Teachers shall regularly be exposed to innovations in their profession.



Effort towards the improvement of the quality of education at the primary and secondary level shall include (NPE, 2004).

- i. Appointment of academically and professionally qualified persons teachers as head teachers.
- ii. regulate in-service training programmes for teachers and head teachers.

Skill Acquisition by Teachers

The teacher is indispensable in the entire educational system of any nation. He is the pivot around which educational wheels revolve. He is also the bedrock of any education system.

Oon (2002) Stated that a teacher is a person who had undergone approved professional training in education at appropriate levels capable of imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills to the students. The teacher acquires professional training in teacher training institutions, Colleges of Education, Faculty of Education in the University etc.

In the process of training the teacher is equipped with the techniques, methodologies and skills which will enable him to confidently and effectively impart information, knowledge and skills to the learner. The learners will be handicapped when taught by incompetent teachers who are not adequately trained and prepared for the job.

It is a known fact that teaching is a serious business. It is a specialized job. Therefore, one needs to be involved in formal training in a teacher's college. There is need to equip the teacher adequately for his job. It therefore means that entering qualification into the teacher training institutes should be standardized. It is when capable hands are trained and prepared for the job of teaching that the teaching profession, will be filled with qualified, competent manpower. Poor quality teacher will produce ill-prepared teachers who have no confidence in themselves in the face of challenging world. Thus, the teacher and learner need a very good academic environment for effective teaching and learning processes.

Importance of Teacher Education

- i. Teacher education helps to produce competent professional teachers
- ii. It brings about effective education
- iii. Quality teacher education help to enhance the standard of education and the survival of a nation or country is dependent to a large extent on quality and adequacy of the education.
- vi. Qualitative teachers education is a veritable instrument par excellence for social development.
- vi. Implementation of educational curriculum through professional training

Problem Associated with Teacher Education in Nigeria



- i) **Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities:** Teaching and learning can only take place in a conducive academic environment. Adeola (1989) stated that one potent index for evaluating educational standards and quality in any educational endeavor is an examination of the physical plant facilities available for learning. Therefore, the presence of adequate infrastructural facilities is a factor, which can contribute to successful teaching and learning in educational institutions.
Many of the teacher training institutions are constrained by inadequate infrastructural facilities. These facilities include: school compound building, educational facilities (sports facilities, laboratories, libraries etc transport, computers etc. This hinders successful and meaningful teaching and learning in the classroom leading to the production of half-baked teachers.
 - ii) **Inadequate Funds:** Education is a consumer industry. A lot of money is needed to procure the human and materials resources that are required. Inadequate funds have crippled academic activities in most of the teaching institution.
 - iii) **Corruption:** Corruption has been stated as the cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation. It is a disease that needs serious cure in order to salvage the education sector of this nation. Many cases abound where how quality candidates are admitted into teacher training institutions at the expense of intelligent ones for being the highest bidders. Thus admission is being sold and bought by those who can afford it. These crop of people never do well, and they can do anything humanly possible to obtain the certificates which cannot be defended anywhere
It is unfortunate that these ill prepared and equipped teachers through godfatherism will be the first to be recruited into the teaching profession. This contributes in lowering the standard of education in the country.
- i. **High Mobility of Teachers:** The teacher can sometimes be referred to as the best job seeker. He is always on the move to other professions Thus, Ibrahim in Ezeani (2006) stated that the teaching profession is a dumping ground for all who have no alternative place to go. The profession is flooded by uncommitted members who see the teaching as a last resort for survival and a sure base for the take off into other more lucrative areas. As a result, a lot of resources are wasted in training these category of non-committed and dedicated teachers.
 - ii. **Poor Entry Requirement:** The entry requirement teacher into training institutions is low compared to other courses. It is an easy task to enter into teacher training institution, any holder of WAEC or NECO certificate irrespective of the grades are admitted into the education courses. Even JAMB requirement for education



courses is lower than that for other courses. Thus, low quality candidates are admitted into either college of education or faculty of education in the universities.

iii. **Quality, of Lecturers in the Teacher Training Institutions:** Through corruption and godfatherism, some unscrupulous and incompetent lecturers are found in the classroom at the expense of highly intelligent and qualified ones. As stated in the National Policy on Education (2004), no education can rise above the quality of the teachers. Therefore, the quality of teaching staff of any institution is very paramount for the growth that institutions and the society at large.

The presence of the unqualified lecturers brings about low-productivity and their products are also unproductive. Thus Okafor and Obienyem (1996) stated:

- i) Teacher education in Nigeria is already losing its quality as identified in the non-productivity of those products that acquired certificates.
- ii) The Student who are in turn' produced by these teachers who have cheated, lack basic knowledge and skills and hence, incapable of coping with serious academic work.

Prospects of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The problem of qualified teachers in the classroom has been tackled by the introduction of Teacher Registration Council which was enacted into law by Act No. 31 of 1993. The country enacted the law to give teaching all the benefits of a profession. The council is charged with many challenging responsibilities, among which determining what standard of knowledge and skills to be attained by persons seeking become registered as teachers and raising those standards from time to time as the circumstances may require.

The problem of finance has been reduced by government adhering to the UNESCO (1995) recommendations of 26% of the national budget to education. And introduction of the education tax fund (ETF) that has contributed a lot in financing of education.

One of the functions of lecturers in the tertiary institutions is to be involved in researches which will make them to be abreast with current issues and knowledge. To enforce this, National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) have approved conference allowances for interested lecturers. The issue of staff development has also taken a new leaf by the intervention of Education Tax fund (ETF) that has graciously approved certain amount for lecturers who intend to further their education based on the degree in view.

Recommendations



Teachers are the most crucial input in the educational system thus, they need to be equipped with all the techniques, principles, methodologies and theories that will make them to be skilled and competent in discharging their enormous duties. To actualize this, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Adequate infrastructural facilities should be made available,
2. Adequate funds should also be provided
3. Teacher Registration Council should be made more functional.
4. The entry requirements into education courses should be raised and admission requirements into Pre-NCE Programme should be revisited.
5. Conditions of service for teachers should be improved to attract best heads into teacher training institutions.
6. Teacher education curriculum should be restructured.



Conclusion

Teacher education is inevitable in the acquisition of practical and applied skills in the teaching profession. The goals of teacher education can only be achieved when adequate preparation is made through the provision of required facilities, restructuring of the curriculum to address current issues, introduction of modern methods of teaching and revisiting admission requirements into teacher training institutions

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