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Refocusing the Quality of Teachers for Enviably Productive in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper described the teacher education as the pivot upon which all educational system relies on and has to be in constant review and refocusing. The teacher occupies a unique position in the educational system as the realization of educational goals rest on the teachers. The teacher is an indispensable resource in any teaching/learning situation. The quality of teachers has to be sustained in order to produce a good work force that would organize all aspects of the economic activities in any country. Going by what is on ground today in Nigeria in both primary and secondary schools, there is a shortfall of in the quality expectations of teachers. It is berserk with inadequate classrooms, shortage of teachers, poor remuneration, poor funding, shortage of furniture for teachers and students/ pupils, poor or absence electricity supply etc. This is the reason why this paper recommended that there should be refocusing of the quality of teachers through the installation of sustainable infrastructure facilities, good remuneration, attractive working environment and improved regular funding, overcoming corruption at all levels etc.

Introduction

Generally, education is perceived as an instrument for the attainment of rapid political, technological, scientific, religious, cultural, social and economic development of any country. In Nigeria, the federal government has indicated that education shall continue to be highly rated in the national development plans because education is the most important instrument of change. In recent past, many educational programmes especially in primary and secondary levels have not been able to meet the required standard

due to the poor performance the available teaching materials at these levels. One will recall that several crash programmes were organized in the past to meet up with the requirement for example the (UPE and UBE) universal primary / basic education programme of the 1980s, these crash programmes produced the urgently needed teachers without looking at the qualification of such 'quickly made' teachers. Continued efforts have been made in order to readdress this trend.

More often than not these programmes have continued to fail due to other issues such as lack of infrastructural facilities, error in projected enrolment of pupils / students and many other factors. But more disheartening, is the inadequate qualified teachers irrespective of what government has been trying to do with the establishment of more teacher training institutions nationwide.

With the educational system of the 6-3-3-4 or 9-3-4, there will be the need for qualified teachers to handle the programmes for it to be successful. The teacher education institutions have continued to work towards improving the standard so that at least the required trained teachers would be available for these schemes. However, these qualified teachers are already exposed to relevant and academic programmes while undergoing the training coupled with significant knowledge and effective skills and or technique.

Aspects of Quality Education

The concept of education is usually used in variety of contexts to mean several things. Some see education as the initiation of an individual into a society system other than as only schooling involving the transmission of knowledge, skills and attitude while many others equate education with just learning. Education here is looked at, as that institutionalization programme concerned with the transmission of knowledge, skills and attitude within the said institution such as the colleges of education, the university of education, the university, the polytechnic etc. In this regard deliberate interventions by the authority/ experts or persons involved in the educational programmes are given to participants.

Quality education according to Miller (2005) is usually used normatively to refer to some form of excellent or high standard quality education. In more recent times, there is the consideration of the school curriculum as to the effectiveness of the instruction given at the school. There must be continuous evaluation, monitoring, implementation and improvement for guaranteed quality in teacher education.

The teacher education institutions currently still receive at all levels traditional lecture method with little or no emphasis on the application of information communication technology (ICT) and other innovations of the 21st century to the teaching/learning process. Owolabi, Oyewole and Oke (2013) in their study observed that the usage of information communication and technology (ICT) in facilitating teacher education is still a mirage in Nigeria as many of the teachers are not ICT literates.

Fafunwa (1990) observed that one of the expectations from education is the production of opportunities to enhance the quality life. With such expectation the improved life style of teachers in the programme would enhance their abilities and capabilities thereby creating the urge for them to better their lots.

All of these put together a cursory look at the quality of teachers' training programme reveals that they have not been adequately taken care off. This is reason why the production work of the teachers has dwindled hence a great harm has been done to the pupils/ students. Just as an untrained surgeon can do great harm to the human body, an untrained teacher can harm not only one but hundreds of thousands of students through bad example or other vices. Saraydarian (2004) opined that a teacher should be able to take care of his/her body and dress properly such that he/she does not evoke wrong desires and

he/she must be an example of simplicity, joy and solemnity without artificiality to their pupils / students. These cannot be attained if the teacher is not well paid and dwells in a poorly ventilated office environment.

Training Period for Teacher Education

In earlier years there were about three categories of teachers. They were grade four, grade three and grade two teachers. Each category of these grades had different numbers of years to undergo training. This grade allowed specified training instructions for whatever level of teachers so that when one completed the particular course of study, he/she knew where they belonged whether younger children or more matured adults. With the phasing out of these grades of teachers which took some many years to train, diverse methods of teacher training programmes now exist in the country at various institutions with haphazard training alteration for different types of certificate holders who may have incurable deficiencies to pursue education in other academic fields or disciplines. Some institutions use two or three years to qualify teachers.

The method of training is not coordinated such that the professional training periods for teachers are over looked and as such the quality of training from institution to institution differs. In order to put an end to this bad trend, it becomes very paramount to clearly state that for anyone who wants to teach at primary or secondary schools, should commence their training from their senior secondary school level with a certain number of years after which he/she should have at least a year or so to practically teach in primary or secondary school before being awarded the certificate.

Teacher Education

The base of proper foundation and training of needed manpower irrespective of area of specialization is a function of sound products from the teacher education department. The standard of any education in any country depends to a large extent to the quality teachers in the educational system.

According to the national policy on education (2004) the purpose of teacher education are as follows:

- To enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.
- To produce teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate to any changing situation not only in life of their country but to the wider world.
- To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- To help teachers fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.
- To produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.

Despite all of these, the labour market expectations cannot be met. Apart from the fact that the teacher cannot cope with the rapid school expansion, many of the available teachers are not qualified because they have not received adequate and proper training for the jobs to be performed.

The major problem of teachers in Nigeria is the fact that teachers being trained now are not sufficiently prepared in order to meet the complex demand of teaching process in the country as regards the schools and colleges. The unqualified teachers could at best be warming the classrooms and keeping the children busy doing nothing. In planning educational improvement, teacher education will always come

to lime light as no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The quality of education is largely tied to the quality and supply of teachers handling it.

The Role of a Teacher

Teachers usually do not have a way of knowing that they have made a difference in a child's or a person's life even when a drastic change has been observed. Good teachers add flavour to children's life and over the years would have redirected the lives of hundreds and millions of young people. For many teachers to fit into the Nigerian educational system, they must be exposed to relevant academic programmes. The numbers and kinds of teachers available largely determine the success or failure of an educational programme. It is expected that there should be quality and quantity of teachers needed for such jobs in the field of education.

Odu (1994) remarked that much work must be done to avoid the failure of the educational programme done in the past such as the defunct universal primary education (UPE) programmes. These failures did not only come about as a result of the quality of teachers but coupled with other factors which tended to reduce the efforts put in by the teachers. The quality of training the teacher, the exposure of the teacher and the motivation of the teacher are all factors that determine the effectiveness of the teacher. Invariably, one cannot rule out the environment of the school as part of the effectiveness of such teachers.

The role of quality of teachers to human development is very conspicuous and as such teacher education must be given all the seriousness it requires as both old and young people are involved. The teacher is the main figure in the process of guiding children through education. It is believed that teachers are the prime movers in all human development and as such people think that this development and progress must continue to improve standards. The teachers are fore runners of all participants in the upbringing of a refined generation by contributing their best towards ensuring effective and fruitful school education. The teacher does not just stop at efficient and effective teaching, rather they become role models for their pupils/students.

Associated Problems of Teacher Education

Teacher education in Nigeria has been foot dragging to achieve the desired objectives. Okorafor (2006) opined that teacher educational institutions are not better than primary or secondary educational systems in the sense that they are still based on the production of facts rather than emphasis being placed on practical works.

Many public primary and secondary schools in Nigeria have become shadows of themselves. There are so many dilapidated buildings, blown off roof tops, uncemented floors, insufficient tables and chairs for both pupils /students and teachers etc. Busari and Oyelami (2004) insisted that most of the buildings which were erected during the colonial era/ regime and missionary periods are what they still use in most schools in Nigeria. Even with this, buildings and classrooms are inadequate and absent in some schools today. The universal basic education (UBE) programme has not taken care of this problem after adding a few buildings without repairing old ones, it goes back to where it all started from. Busari and Oyelami (2004) added that the dilapidated buildings and classrooms are even more than the few additional classrooms which the UBE provided.

Generally, there is the shortage of teachers in schools as regards some subject areas. Eyibe (2002) stressed that special problems are envisaged in specific subject areas. This is the reason why unqualified teachers were employed to teach the supposed specialized subject areas.

There is another major problem of funding in the educational sector. All stakeholders especially the federal, state and local governments find it difficult to fund the teaching profession. The irony is that budgets are prepared but the implementation becomes a huge problem as many government officials are only interested in the gains they will make out of their leadership positions. This is the reason for the wide scale corruption in the system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The saying that quality is not cheaply achieved then means that the essence of working for better quality must be enforced. As much as possible, there must be continuous monitoring of the implementation and improvement of quality in the education sector. The fact that national development relies heavily on education poses challenges and as such planners should go in this line to be able to get somewhere rather than not do anything that may jeopardize the situation.

For teachers to be more productive, it will only be fair for them to be provided with good working condition in terms of office space, furniture, equipment etc., giving the teachers better working condition can equally enhance their life styles when provided with facilities likes housing, car loans which may increase their commitment to their teaching profession and ensuring the quality of work to be done.

It is a must that teachers should be kept abreast with discoveries in the educational sector. Modern advancement that make education seen easy should not be seen as shortcuts for teachers rather these advancements should improve and enhance the teacher's capabilities in driving such information home to the pupils/ students. This would go a long way to making education better and, in the process, increase the standard.

As much as possible, there should always be seminars, workshops and conferences from time to time organized for to refresh the teacher on the new innovations and technologies. These seminars/workshops keep one abreast with the happenings in the educational world

With regular review of wages and salaries the teachers would be encouraged to do better. Professionalism should be enforced such that brain drain from other professions would become a thing of the past and the unqualified teachers MUST undergo teacher training programmes in order for them to remain in the teaching profession and improving their lots.

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