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Teaching as a Career: Perception of University Education Students in Cross River State (Pp. 482-491)

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Abstract

This study in which survey design was utilized sought to determine trainee teachers' perception of pursuing teaching as a career; and to determine those factors responsible for their perceptions. Four research questions were postulated to guide the study and a research instrument tagged 'Student Teaching Career Questionnaire (STECAQ)' was designed to collect data from the 233 registered final year students who constituted the study sample. The findings showed that 135(57.9%) of the students want to be teachers after graduation; out of those interested in making teaching their professional career 40(29.6%) are in education Sciences; More females are favourably disposed to making teaching their career after graduation than males. Low societal regard for teachers, low remuneration and allowing of non-trained teachers into the profession were among the factors cited as inhibiting students from making teaching their career after graduation. It

was recommended among others that the agreed teacher salary scale be paid by the government both at the state and federal levels.

Introduction and Background to the Study

The ultimate strength of any nation hinges on the social responsibility, economic competency and moral strength of her citizens, an onus that is solely borne by teachers through teaching. This is so because the primary obligation of teaching profession any where in the world is to guide children, youths and adults in the pursuit of knowledge and skills to develop healthy attitudes for harmonious living (Adu & Olatundun, 2007). Teaching according to Mandla (2000) is therefore a social service career and no career is more of value to society than teaching. It is thus, a unique profession whose quality directly influences the future of any nation. Of course, teaching touches the life of virtually everyone in the society, as the doctor, engineer, accountant, banker, scientist and so forth were all taught by teachers in the course of their professional training. Little wonder, Ukeje (1991) asserted that in a developing nation, teaching is the most vital and strategic profession for national development. In line with this assertion, Salami (1999) argued that the greatness of a nation does not consist in the abundance of her resources but on the educational system and the teachers.

In the past, in this country teaching and teachers were given due recognition and teachers went about their duties diligently and with pride. They were contented with their jobs and many people would like to be teachers or have their children stay with a teacher for moral and intellectual upbringing. However, those good old days are gone, and the profession has almost become an orphan that is not qualified for the orphanage home. Today, not many youths want to go into the teaching profession. According to Salami (1999) many of the teachers drop into the profession as a last resort and when they find an alternative job quickly drop out. Thus, there is a drop-in-drop-out syndrome in the teaching profession which does not exist in professions like law, engineering and medicine. It is well known that many people today regard the teaching profession as the dreg of all profession and consequently the last choice by many applicants (Jagun, 1990, Salami, 1999).

Commenting on youth aversion to teaching, Wokocha (2002) noted that today, students in other faculties regard their counterparts in the faculties of education as pursuing careers that lead them to a life of poverty. Similarly, Idaka and Joshua (2007) asserted that the aversion for teaching has resulted

to a situation where trained teachers in the areas of Political Science and Business Education prefer to introduce themselves as political scientist and Accountants respectively.

Although, the pivotal role of teaching and teachers in the development of a nation is well documented in literature, youths in Nigeria appear not to be attracted to the noble role of teaching as a strategic profession in a country like ours. As the light of hope for the youths and the entire country is dimming due to this pathological aversion for teaching, a study like this present one is therefore imperative in order to examine those factors that may give direction and scope.

Problem of the Study

The under-utilization of trained manpower is so rampant in Nigeria these days. This problem is exacerbated by the unemployment situation prevailing in the country. It is not uncommon to see trained Medical doctors, Engineering graduate, etc working in banks instead of contributing to the nation's development through their field of training. With the recent government Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy, the need for well trained quality teachers to fill the available vacancies is dire. This study therefore aims at:

1. investigating trainee-teachers' perceptions of pursuing teaching as a career after graduation
2. determining the factors responsible for their perception.

To achieve these aims, the following Research Questions will guide the study:

1. Is Education the first choice for course of study of final year education students?
2. Are male and female Education students interested in being professional teachers after graduation?
3. Are Education students in various teaching courses interested in being professional teachers?
4. What are the reasons for students' decision regarding becoming professional teachers?

Methods

The survey research design was adopted for this study aimed at determining education students' opinion of teaching as a career. The study involved the two universities located in Cross River State namely- Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH) and University of Calabar (UNICAL). The population for the study comprised all registered final year students in six departments of the two education faculties. Stratified random sampling procedure was utilized to select 50 per cent of students in each department. This yielded in UNICAL 46 students for department of Educational Administration and Planning; 50 students for Educational Foundations department; 31 students for Curriculum and Teaching department; and 26 students for the department of Vocational and Adult Education. While for CRUTECH, it was 38 and 42 students for the departments of Educational Foundations and Administration and Curriculum and Instructional Technology respectively.

Instrument for data collection was researcher-constructed questionnaire tagged Students' Teaching Career Questionnaire (STECAQ) which was face validated by two educational researchers. Section A of the research instrument sought demographic information such as gender and teaching course. Section B contained 6 items, 3 of which had response options while the other 3 were open-ended questions which required respondents to express their opinions. Face- to- face hand delivery method was utilized for the administration of the questionnaire.

Out of the 233 respondents, 90 were males while 143 were females. In terms of teaching courses, 67 were majoring in Education Science, 54 in Education Arts, 54 in Education Social Science, and 58 in Vocational and Adult Education. Data was analyzed using simple percentages.

Results and Discussion

The findings as regards research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4 are presented in Table 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively and thereafter discussed.

Research question 1: *Is Education the first choice for course of study of final year education students?*

Table 1 shows that of the 233 respondents only 154 (66.1%) actually wanted to study education while 79 (33.9%) indicated that education was not their first choice for course of study.

Research question 2: *Are male and female Education students interested in being professional teachers after graduation?*

Table 2 shows that greater percentages of females (62.2%) are favourably disposed to making teaching their career than (51.1%) for males. It equally shows that (32.2%) males were not willing to becoming teachers while (22.4%) of females were not willing. Also (16.7%) were not sure of being teachers while (15.4%) were not sure.

Research question 3: *Are Education students in various teaching courses are interested in being professional teachers?*

The result in Table 3 show that out of the 135 respondents who agreed to make teaching a career 29.6% are Education Science students, and the least percentage, 18.5% are Education Social Science students. The same table indicates that of those who do not want to make teaching their career, a higher percentage of 27.9% and 26.2% are of Vocational Education and Social Science respectively. Again, 35.1% and 32.4% of those not sure of becoming professional teachers come from Education Social Science and Education Science.

Research question 4: *What are the reasons for students' decision regarding becoming professional teachers?*

The findings of this study in Table 1 show that of the 233 respondents only 154 (66.1%) actually wanted to study education while 79 (33.9%) indicated that education was not their first choice for course of study. With respect to the question of becoming professional teachers after graduation, the results in Table 2 show that 135 (57.9%) of the respondents wanted to be professional teachers after graduation, 61 (26.2%) have no desire to be professional teachers while 37 (15.9%) were not of becoming teachers. In terms of gender, table 2 shows that greater percentages of females (62.2%) are favourably disposed to making teaching their career than (51.1%) for males. It equally shows that (32.2%) males were not willing to becoming teachers while (22.4%) of females were not willing. Again (16.7%) males were not

sure of being teachers while (15.4%) females were not sure. This finding indicates that women (females) are more favourably disposed to making teaching a career than their male counterparts. This finding is in agreement with the commonly held notion that teaching is a female profession. Although, the literature search appears to be silent on this, this finding is understandable as women contribute the bulk of the teaching force at both the primary and secondary level in Nigeria. The finding in this study in Table 3 indicates that Education Science students are more willing to make teaching a career, unlike their counterparts in Education Social Science and Vocational Studies. This finding has a grave implication for finding qualified teachers for employment in these disciplines in the future.

The choice of course of study is often a stepping stone to a career path. The results in Table 1 can be attributed to the pressure for access to higher education. In Nigeria, millions of candidates sit for entry examination annually into universities but only a few per cent get admitted. This situation has given rise to students studying courses they have no interest in just to get into the university. The worrisome aspect of this development is that after training, these grandaunts do not contribute to the discipline they were trained in. As revealed by this study, a sum of 98(42.1%) were either not interested or not sure of being teachers after training. This leaves a vacuum often filled by non-trained / professional teachers.

Justifying their decisions of becoming professional teachers after graduation, the 135 (57.9%) as shown in table 4 gave reasons such as opportunity to teach others, recognition of teacher as nation builders, acquisition of more knowledge, contribution to the nation's educational development and so on as the reasons fuelling their desires to be professional teachers after graduation. The 61(26.2%) that had no intention of becoming teachers cited reasons such as not getting admission into area of interest, low societal regard for teachers, low income earned by teachers etc as reasons for not wanting to be teachers after graduation. The 37(15.9%) that were not sure of joining the teaching profession after graduation gave reasons such as intention to be self employed, unpalatable treatment of teachers in Nigeria, intention to pursue other careers and the stressful nature of teaching as being responsible for their decision. The combination of facts revealed in this study affirm that some students without interest in teaching study education, and even after spending four years majoring in various teaching subjects some neither still do not want to teach / nor are they sure of becoming teachers. These cadres of

grandaunts who view teaching as a temporary career enter the teaching profession as a last resort, a sort of waiting point until other opportunities come up. While leaving the teaching profession for greener pastures is not new in Nigeria, what is worrisome is the intention of those currently being trained to fill the vacuum having the same intention.

Conclusion

The following conclusions are drawn from the findings of this study:

1. Education was not the first choice for courses of study for some students studying Education.
2. More females are favourably disposed to making teaching their career after graduation than males.
3. Not all students studying Education have intention of making teaching their professional career.
4. Opportunity to teach others, love teaching, enhancement /acquisition of more knowledge and contribute to the nation's educational development are some of the reasons for students' interest in making teaching their career.
5. Low societal regard for teachers, low remuneration and allowing of non-trained teachers into the teaching profession are among the factors responsible for students' lack of interest in joining the teaching profession.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn in this study, it is hereby recommended that:

1. The government should professionalise teaching and the practitioners placed on the same pedestal with their counterparts in other professions like medicine, law, engineering and so on.
2. Teacher Salary Scale (TSS) earlier agreed upon should be paid to teachers both at the state and federal level
3. Opportunity for professional development that will enhance the career prospect of teachers should be provided for teachers.
4. Admission to study education should not be granted to students who view education as last resort course and have no interest in pursuing teaching career after graduation.

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Table 1: Education as first choice for course of study

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	154	66.1
No	79	33.9
Total	233	100

Table 2: Interest in being a professional teacher after graduation by sex

	Yes		No		Not Sure	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	46	51.1	29	32.2	15	16.7
Female	89	62.2	32	22.4	22	15.4
Total	135	57.9	61	26.2	37	15.9

Table 3: Interest in being a professional teacher after graduation by teaching course

Course %	Yes		No		Not Sure
	N	%	N	%	N
Education Science	40	29.6	15	24.6	12
32.4					
Education Arts	34	25.2	13	21.3	7
19					
Education Soc. Science	25	18.5	16	26.2	13
35.1					
Vocational Education	36	26.7	7	27.9	5
13.5					
Total	135		61		37

Table 4: Reasons for/against/not sure of being a professional teacher after graduation

Reasons
Reasons for
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to teach others• Love teaching• Recognition of teachers as nation builders• Teaching is a noble profession• Opportunity it provides to interact with different people• Enhancement /acquisition of more knowledge.• Use of my talent• Respect accorded teachers as learned people.• Contribute to the nation's educational development• Provides more time for the home
Reasons against
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never had interest in teaching.• Did not get admission in area of interest.• Prefer to work in firms/industries.• Discouraging attitude of some lecturers.• Low societal regard for teachers.• Teaching is very stressful profession.• Low income/ remuneration
. Not sure
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can only teach as last resort.• Better opportunities than teaching career affords.• Education was not my initial choice for study• Intend to be self-employed• Unpalatable treatment of teachers in Nigeria.• Intention to pursue other careers• Unattractive salary• Allowing of non-trained teachers into the profession• Stressful nature of teaching
