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CALL FOR PAPERS
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- * Footnotes are not allowed.
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TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE

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Abstract

Teacher education serves as the bedrock of advancement in all facets of human endeavours in the society. However, the teaching profession and teacher preparation have been seriously impacted by the brain drain syndrome, which is affecting development in all sectors. It is disheartening to observe that today's brightest minds, who are supposed to be found in classrooms, have chosen to work in other fields where living conditions appear to be better. Today, majority of schools have teachers who cannot meet society's expectations. As a result, the goal of this paper is to investigate some of the issues affecting teacher education in Nigeria today, as well as the implications for teacher education's future if these issues are not resolved.

Keywords: Teacher, Teacher education, Educational system, Future.

Introduction

The maxim that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers demonstrate the significance of teacher education programmes and teachers in national development. According to Lassa in Osuji (2009), who concurred with this statement that the key to national development is education. In addition, he argued that teachers hold the key to sound education and are the only ones who can turn that key into national development. As a result, every educational development is based on the quality of its teachers. In agreement with this statement, Ukeje in Osuji (2009), opined that the educator is at the centre of the educational process while the child is the centre of the system.

This is due to the fact that, in any educational process, the teacher is always in the front, back, center, or side. What he knows and does can make a big difference and what he does not know or does not do can hurt the child forever. This is because, in the end, the teacher is the one who puts programme into action and policies into practice. In fact, a teacher has an impact on eternity.

The above assertion upholds the way that achievement or otherwise of any country's schooling system relies upon the nature of its education force. National Policy on Education (2014), consequently stated that schooling is the best instrument that the country can utilize for fast improvement of its financial, political, social and human resources. In order for a country to develop and accomplish confidence, general part of its population should be taught, in light since, schooling impacts the populace with necessary information, abilities and skills prompting self-improvement, which translates into the whole society. The teacher holds a prominent position in society as an agent of change and national development, which is a well-known fact. This indicates that the entire process of national development will fail if the teacher is not adequately prepared and fit for his position.

The importance of high-quality teacher education according to Obara in National Policy on Education (2014) is that teaching profession is the most crucial and strategic for national development. This is on the grounds that without great instructors, there cannot be specialists in other fields of discipline and without great educators, there cannot be great school systems. Indeed, the significance of teacher education and the profession cannot be over emphasised. The mistakes made by teachers, as opposed to those made by members of other professions are more devastating to individuals and the nation as a whole.

Ukeje in Ugwokeetal (2012) stated that this statement demonstrates the teacher's crucial role in a national education system development. All arms of improvement of a country rely upon the idea of its educators. If a doctor makes a mistake, a patient may die, if an engineer makes a mistake, a bridge may collapse and when a lawyer makes a mistake, his client may lose his liberty, but if a teacher makes a mistake, it will affect generations yet to unborn.

Any nation's level of development is largely influenced by the quality of its teacher education programme. Schools' product will reflect the calibre of individuals required to serve in the nation's various sectors. Obara in Osuji (2009) substantiated that education must instill certain qualities in people, such as a positive attitude towards work, the desire to acquire skills and appreciation of the value of competence and excellence, in order for change to be meaningful. This cannot be accomplished unless academically sound teachers are produced in the institutions through good example set by higher-level teachers.

According to Madueke in National Policy on Education (2014), since education is directly related to national development and teachers are the ones who put educational policies into practice, the education of teachers should be of topmost priority for any nation that wants to grow in all areas of human endeavour. Moreover, education is the catalyst for all spheres of human development and one agrees that no education system can surpass the quality of its teachers, it follows that a nation with a poor education system will intentionally remain undeveloped and suffer the consequences of underdevelopment.

The Concept of Teacher Education

Scholars have held a variety of perspectives on the idea of teacher education but, they all agreed that teachers (and those who want to become teachers) need professional and career development in order to produce valuable and resourceful teachers who will guarantee effective service delivery to society. According to Adewuyi and Ogunwuyi in Ugwokeetal (2012), the provision of professional education and specialized training within a predetermined time frame for the preparation of individuals who intend to develop and nurture young people into responsible and productive citizens is referred to as teacher education.

Uche & Onyemerekeya in Ugwokeetal (2012), view educator schooling as the preparation given in an establishment to educators to empower them through teaching and impartation of knowledge. According to Osuji (2009), the term 'teacher education' refers to the professional education of teachers with the goal of acquiring the attitudes, skills and knowledge that are considered desirable in order to make teachers more efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the requirements of a particular society at any given time. It incorporates preparation as well as training taking place before the beginning of administration (pre-administration) and during administration (at work).

Teacher training is a programme that is connected to the improvement of educator's ability that would empower and engage the educator to meet the prerequisites of the calling and be ready to face any difficulties (Ugwokeetal, 2012). Afe in Ekpiken & Edet (2014), comprehend educator training as the strategies and practices intended to furnish forthcoming educators with the information, perspectives and abilities they expect to play out their roles successfully in the study hall, school and society in general, while Ekpiken & Edet, (2014) conceptualize schooling as the complete technique of instructing people whose calling is to teach as educators thereby adding their quota to the public work force.

According to Oyeleke et al. (2013), the four main components of teacher education training are as follows: overall expansive schooling project to acquire scholarly information on educators. This is a crucial component of the teacher education program for all trainees. Basic humanities knowledge and citizenship education are among the courses; use of English, language and communication, knowledge of computers and general mathematics, among other things.

The subject area of specialization is the second aspect: A trainee is expected to specialize in not more than two subjects at most in universities and training centres. The third part: is all about professional courses that are meant to teach trainees the science of teaching and learning. They cover topics like educational administration, guidance and counselling, philosophy of education, psychology of education and sociology of education, while the last part of teacher training: is commonsense stage planned in two modes (Nakpodia, 2012).

The first method is micro teaching; which is experimental in nature and aims to instill the necessary confidence in a classroom setting. In this method, the number of students in each class and the length of each lesson are reduced to a size that an

inexperienced teacher can easily manage. The actual teaching practice; takes place in the second mode and teacher-trainees are sent to schools to teach under the guidance of experienced teachers in the schools where they are posted as well as external supervisors. According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2014), the goal of teacher education includes:

- a) Producing classroom teachers who are highly motivated, diligent, and effective at all levels of our educational system;
- b) further encouraging teachers to have a spirit of inquiry and creativity;
- c) assisting teachers in integrating into the social life of the community and society as a whole and strengthening their commitment to national goals;
- d) providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background necessary for their assignment and making them adaptable to changing circumstances;
- e) strengthening teachers' commitment to the profession of teaching.

The Problem Associated with Teacher Education

The difficulties before educator training are as follows according to Ekpiken and Edet, (2014):

1) Brain Drain:

Rather than being in the classrooms, where the conditions of service are more lucrative, the best minds are found in other sectors. In past studies, it was found out that rather than becoming an instructor, people ranked teaching as the least work they will do. This is because of the poor state of teaching caused by the government's attitude, which results in the non-or-late payment of salaries and slow pace of promotions, as well as low remuneration in the teaching sector. Individuals today really prefer to work in the oil companies and medical establishments.

2) Lack of funds:

In Nigeria, the success of teacher education and all activities depend on proper funding. Absence of enough assets has forestalled the execution of significant ventures in the greater part of the teacher education institutions in Nigeria today. Also, the attitude of Nigerian administrators has impacted the efficient use of these institutions' fund. The majority of the funds given to these institutions end up in the pockets of a selected few, with the projects that needed the funds being neglected. Therefore, bribery and corruption, which currently has become the norm are linked to inadequate funding.

3) Inadequate Foundation and Materials:

Ngada in Oyeleke et al. (2013), discovered that auditoriums, study halls, research centres, lodgings, staff quarters, office furniture were lacking in the majority of education establishments. This is more obvious particularly in state acclaimed universities. Infact, in the government organizations one

may find out that the proportion of previous studies material that are accessible to educators and students are extremely few. This is more apparent among undergraduates offering the sciences, specialized and business courses. In some cases, where there are over 1,000 students enrolled in an institution and only 30-40 typewriters and 30-40 computers were available for use, showed gross shortage of materials. Most times the classrooms are overcrowded with 200 students in a classroom meant for maximum capacity of 50 students. Hostels are often jam-packed and accommodations for lecturers are inadequate. Staff quarters were scarce everywhere (Oyeleke, Akinyeye, & Opeloye, 2013).

Most laboratories are virtually empty and practical is scarce, this is due to the absence of chemicals required for the practical in the laboratories, the majority of students fail to complete their courses. Some of these chemicals are borrowed from other places so that external bodies sent in for accreditation checks will believe that everything is available. However, once the accreditation team leaves these laboratories, the chemicals are returned to where they were borrowed. This is one of the reasons why today there are inadequate science educators in the vast majority of our schools particularly at the higher institutions and universities (Oyeleke et al., 2013).

4) The Quality of Students accepted into the schools:

Majority of young people with higher qualifications prefer to apply to the majority of other tertiary institutions, such as polytechnics, nursing schools and colleges of agriculture, where they can work in offices. This is due to the fact that, such work provides them with fast promotions, financial rewards and prestige over the teaching profession, which typically ends in the classroom and in rural areas devoid of modern social amenities (Nakpodia, 2012).

Due to the circumstances mentioned above and what is ongoing in the majority of the schools, such as, assessments misbehaviour, a large portion of the undergraduates in the education training institutions are not as sound academically as they ought to be. Consequently, one comes to the realisation that half-baked teachers who are inexperienced and lack the necessary ability to teach in schools are being produced and are employed in the teaching profession.

Prospects of Teacher Education

The reality shows that teacher education in Nigeria has a bleak future, if the afore mentioned problems are not addressed. All other facets of Nigeria's development will be similarly impacted by this teacher education situation. The instructor who should guide and lay good example for the undergraduate before him encourages indiscipline in the classroom (Balogun, 2010). This happens because, the teacher has failed in his duties so, to cover up his negligence, he encourages cheating in order to make sure his students pass. In the end, his products engage in bribery and corruption when they enter other sectors of the nation's organizations. This issue is

deeply rooted in the Nigerian fabric and teachers need to change their mindset, if bribery and corruption is to become a thing of the past and work hard to maintain their discipline. The type of undergraduates being selected into the institutions of higher learning and those saddled with instructing them are deficient scholastically and this will definitely have an adverse effect on the nation's educational system (Balogun, 2010).

The nation's education system is producing more theoretical oriented teachers than practical teachers due to a lack of proper funding, adequate infrastructure, materials and equipment. This is more evident in the sciences, where students are trained in chemical-free laboratories, which is also, apparent in other fields like engineering and medicine. There is still a lot that can be done to put teacher education in a good position to provide quality teachers who will guarantee quality education and a vibrant society, despite the numerous obstacles previously discussed. Due to the high cost of education, the sector's funding needs to be increased and should not be left solely in the hands of governments; through a strong public-private partnership, private institutions and multinational corporations should also contribute to the funding of education programs in Nigeria (Ejiogu, 2003). A proper accountability mechanism should be established to ensure that all appropriated funds are used as planned, and any misappropriations should be dealt with squarely, with the culprits punished and the funds stolen recovered and redirected to areas of need.

According to Akintidure and Ekundayo (2012), teachers should be mandated to obtain professional teaching credentials in order to uphold the code of ethics and ensure that only qualified individuals can enter the profession. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and other associated bodies should implement Mandatory Professional Development Courses (MPCD) to ensure that teachers remain current on the theories and practices of their profession. This will lessen the impact of the invasion of the education system by individuals who are neither trained nor interested in teaching as a career. Also, a special salary scale like the Teachers Salary Structure (TSS) should be put in place to give teachers with a lot of experience and a good background in education a special professional allowance. In order, for education training institution to get its pride of place, these regulations must be put in place to change the mindset of individuals in respects the of educators and their position in the nation (Ajayi & Shofoyeke, 2003). In order to attract and keep young people in the profession, teaching must be recognized by the government as the foundation of other professions and given its proper place in society. In addition, the teacher education curriculum must be revised to incorporate ICT, entrepreneurship skills and development courses to ensure that teachers are prepared for self-employment in the light of the growing graduate unemployment rate in the nation.

According to Akintidure & Ekundayo (2012), the school system's output and productivity can be enhanced by motivating teachers. Sufficient persuasive motivating forces as far as state of administration ought to be given and the public authority ought to overhaul the current states of educators to be more practical orientated. In addition, schools' infrastructure needs to be upgraded to a higher level and qualified experts should be employed in the schools. Ibukun in Akintidure & Ekundayo (2012) called for the teacher education program to incorporate cutting-

edge educational tools like computers and modern instructional materials. It should be noted that no program will be successful unless adequate infrastructure is provided for its implementation.

Teachers, on the other hand, must demonstrate a high level of dedication to their work. They ought to show diligence and competency in completing their obligations. Teachers must not deviate from their traditional role of providing a platform for nation building and role modelling for future leaders, regardless of the extent to which teachers are downgraded in the society. Moreover, certified educationist with great standing and experience ought to be designated as executives of schooling establishments and projects; this will empower them to control, carry out and direct different parts of education training programs. It is an aberration to permit none certificated people to direct and coordinate the certified, licensed and authorized experts.

Conclusion

It is common knowledge that the foundation of the nation's development is teacher education. This is on the grounds that without great educators, there can be no specialists in other fields of discipline. It is evident that any flaw in the education system has great impact on the entire nation when compared to other occupations.

Recommendations

The following suggestions were made based on the facts presented in this paper:

1. Adequate assets ought to be made accessible to all educators preparing foundation with modern hardware and different materials required to assist them.
2. Only the best individuals academically ought to be selected into education faculty to be prepared as educators.
3. Schools should hire the best graduates who are disciplined and academically sound.
4. The higher institutions of learning should enlist only those that have a flare for education.
5. To attract and retain more individuals in the teaching profession, better service conditions should be provided for teachers as obtainable in most other industries.
6. Close attention needs to be paid to teacher education particularly, in terms of funding, hiring mature experienced teachers for our school system and providing teachers with sufficient materials and equipment for training.
7. The educators ought to be given adequate remuneration to boost their morale to retain them.

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