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TEACHER PREPARATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Jacinta Ifeoma Obidile

Abstract

Teacher preparation through education, training and development needs to be reformed to enhance the provision of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education in Nigeria. The Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes the importance of teachers when it states that no nation can develop above their teachers. This paper therefore discusses the concept of teacher, teacher education and training, problems confronting teacher preparation such as poor funding of teachers' training programmes, inadequate incentives and measures for attracting more talents into the teaching profession, low level of ICT penetration and utilization in the training and development of teachers, among others. The paper also proffers solutions that should be implemented to enhance teachers' training, commitment and development such as; proper funding of teacher education and training programmes, adequate provision and effective use of technology in teachers' training and development, re-assessment of the requirements for admission, graduation and recruitment of teachers, enhancement of conditions of service of teachers and reduction of brain drain phenomenon in the teaching profession, among others. The paper concludes that teacher preparation in Nigeria should be given adequate attention in line with current realities for optimum teachers' performance.

Keywords: Teacher, Teacher preparation, Education, Challenges, Way Forward.

Introduction

Teachers are the pillars of education development in all countries all over the world. They are important assets required for national development. Teachers are people who attempt to help someone to acquire skills, attitude, ideas and knowledge that would create or influence desirable changes in the behaviours of the learners (Okoli, Ogbondah & Ekpefa-Abdullahi, 2015). Teachers' professional abilities are the major determinants of the quality of education in any society. In fact, no nation can boast of a strong and effective system without the continuous development of its teachers. Their roles are crucial in the learning process. As a result, there is need for a sound pedagogical foundation in the teachers' training, education and development since nobody can give what he does not have. Teacher's education, training and development in Nigeria which usually occur before commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job), should therefore be given adequate attention in line with current realities, for optimum teachers' performance.

Teacher education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time (Ogunyinka, Okeke & Adedoyin, 2015). It is a programme of education, research and training for people who want to teach at all levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education (Akindutire & Ekundayo, 2012). It can also be defined as the activities aimed at providing the prospective and in-service teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour



and skills which they need to perform their duties effectively in the classroom, school and community. It is a specialized form of training for the preparation of individuals who intend to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens.

The goals of teacher education according to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education include:

1. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the 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 the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
5. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The Policy further stresses that the government would continue to give major emphasis to education and all matters of educational development. It also provides that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. It underscores the need for teachers to be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. The Policy further recognizes the need for in-service training as an integral part of continuing teacher education. Achievement of these goals will enhance the quality of teachers in the country. Despite the numerous recommendations and reforms over the years aimed at repositioning teacher preparation and training in the country for optimal performance, teacher education in Nigeria is still facing numerous challenges. Some of the challenges seem to emerge either with the changing socio-economic and political situations in the country or as a result of government neglect of the education sector, especially as it concerns keeping pace with emerging realities, such as; servicing Nigeria growing population education demand and matching the supply of education services and facilities; low funding of teachers' training programmes, among others.

Several studies (Yusuf & Dada, 2016; Yusuf & El Yakub, 2020; Oluwatosin & Bolanle, 2023; Flores, 2023) have shown that a number of significant areas of concern should be seriously addressed to enhance teacher education, training and development. These areas, according to the authors, include poor policy implementation, low level of ICT penetration and utilization in the teaching and learning process, non-professionalization of teaching and inadequate budgeting and planning for future teachers. Other areas of concern include; inadequate provision of opportunities for in-service training tailored towards addressing professional shortcomings, inadequate provision of facilities for modern practice of teaching, inadequate incentives and measures for attracting more talents into the teaching profession, low level of ICT penetration and utilization in the training and development of teachers, among others. Eradication of these problems in the teacher preparation process is paramount as Ukeje (1994) remarked that challenges of teacher education and training in Nigeria should be eradicated, to ensure that teacher trainers do not produce dunces in the name of letting people go, as each of such dunces is surely going to produce thousands of dunces, which will be detrimental to the national developmental aspiration. There is therefore need for the government and educational administrators to provide adequate training, motivation, remuneration package and conducive teaching and learning environment for teachers so as to enhance the provision of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers in education institutions in Nigeria.

The Way Forward

To eliminate or minimize the challenges that are associated with teacher preparation in Nigeria, the following measures should be taken:

1. **Proper funding of teacher education programmes:** Adequate funds should be provided for the teacher education programmes. Budgetary allocations to Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Nigerian Universities' Faculties of Education need to be significantly increased based on their needs and requirements. Serious commitment should be seen on the part of the government towards the teacher education training and programmes with regards to; provision of adequate modern instructional facilities (Obidile & Ikpai, 2019), conducive environment for teaching and learning, among others as these would enhance the attraction and retention of best brains in the teacher training institutions and programmes.
2. **Adequate provision and effective use of technology in the teaching and learning processes:** Information and Communications Technological facilities should be adequately provided by the stakeholders in the education sector and effectively utilized by teachers and learners in the teaching and learning processes. Teachers should be regularly exposed to innovative pedagogical strategies in their profession. The knowledge and use of modern technologies are necessary for all teachers if they are to be relevant in the future. Technology has become an essential part of the instructional process and, as a result, has brought about the development of new pedagogical strategies with which teachers should be acquainted. As (Ebhaeme, 2019) noted, the effective use of technology as a tool has enhanced the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process across all subject areas, such as in sciences, arts, etc. It is, therefore, imperative that these technologies are adequately provided and that technology is effectively utilized in the teaching and learning processes.
3. **Adequate Training and Retraining of Teachers:** Training and re-training of teachers should be an integral part of continuing teacher education so as to take care of shortcomings introduced by innovations and modern practices of teaching. Competencies not acquired during the initial teacher preparation could be acquired during the in-service training. Therefore, teachers at all levels of education are expected to continuously undergo training and re-training in the methods and techniques of teaching to update their teaching skills in line with the current trend. Faculties of Education in Nigerian universities should be mandated to organise in-service training for teachers at other faculties to enhance the pedagogical skills used in the teaching and learning processes.
4. **Re-assessment of the requirements for admission, graduation and recruitment of teachers:** The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommends that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. In the United Kingdom, applicants must be seen to possess certain personal qualities and characteristics before they are admitted for teachers' training (Lassa, 1998). Yet in most of the Nigerian teachers' training institutions, although students' admissions are usually based on obtaining the minimum academic requirements, other requirements such as emotional stability, communication proficiency, among others, seem not to be given adequate consideration. Administrators of teacher training programmes and institutions in Nigeria should also consider the emotional stability, moral qualities and

communication proficiency of the applicant before admission or recruitment into the teachers' training programme/teaching profession.

5. **Revitalization of Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN):** The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is charged with the responsibility of teachers' registration, accreditation, certification, promotion, development, discipline and making regulations to control the practice of teaching as a profession. The administrators of TRCN should wake up to their constitutional mandate and ensure an effective completion of the process of professionalizing teaching in Nigeria. They should pursue their goals vigorously and ensure that teaching will not continue to be open to anyone, as the situation holds the potential of further eroding professionalism in the teaching profession.
6. **Enhancement of conditions of service and reduction of brain drain phenomenon in the teaching profession:** In Nigeria, teachers' conditions of service do not hold enough incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigerian schools (Osokoya, 2012). It is important that the remunerations and conditions of service of teachers in Nigeria should be enhanced, to reduce the brain drain phenomenon, which has led to the drift of some able and experienced teachers to countries where they were offered better remunerations and conditions of service. The reliance on inexperienced teachers in various educational fields in the country would definitely affect the quality of graduates in the country. It is therefore imperative that teachers' salaries and other benefits should be attractive so as to motivate and retain best brains in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

Teacher preparation in Nigeria should be given adequate attention in line with current realities to enhance the provision of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers in education institutions in Nigeria. This could be achieved through the measures discussed in this study.

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