

IMPEDIMENTS AND PANACEA IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the impediments and panacea to teacher education and professional learning programme in Nigeria. The paper is premised on the fact that there are factors mitigating teacher education and professional learning in the country. The paper made use of secondary data in examining the investigating variables of the study. The paper concluded that teacher education and professional learning programme is being affected by a myriad of factors which serves as a bottleneck to the improvement of teacher education and professional learning in the country. The paper suggested that; teacher education and professional learning programme should be given urgent attention by the government and factors affecting its improvement should be attended to by relevant agencies to enhance the programme and by extension improve national growth and development; as only qualified teachers will be involved in the teaching-learning process at various fields of endeavour in the country. This assertion gives credence to the belief that 'teachers are the life wire of every society', Nigeria inclusive.

Keywords: *Education, Teacher Education, Professional Learning, Teaching and Learning*

Introduction

Education is a systematic process of training. It entails a situation whereby the learned consciously or unconsciously transfer knowledge gain overtime to the learning. Education cannot take place without the presence of a teacher that is willing and capable of imparting such gained knowledge to the student in whatever capacity. Dewey (1944) on his part stated that "education can take place in formal or informal settings and that any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels or acts may be considered as educational". Education is abstract in nature and cannot survive without the input of a teacher who is vast in the skill of knowledge transfer (FRN, 2013). Hence, the need for an effective and efficient teacher in the school system who had undergone seasoned training as a professional teacher that is charged with the responsibility of imparting knowledge via various method and techniques which is known as pedagogy in the school setting. The adoption and employment of a pedagogical content knowledge of the particular subject matter. Professional learning in the school system presupposes that the teacher in question should have the requirement necessary to undertake such task which by extension serves as a benchmark for the development of the country across all strata of the nation.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study

- To examine the impediments to teachers education programme in the country and proffer workable solutions to remedy them
- To evaluate teacher professional learning and standards with a view to improving teaching and learning

Teacher Education in Nigeria

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) (1998) in its Quality Concerns in Secondary Teacher Education stated that “the teacher is the most important element in any educational programme. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for implementation of the educational process at any stage.” This shows that it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secured. Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. It is a well-known saying that the teacher is the nation builder. According to Goods Dictionary of Education, Teacher education entails all the formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession or to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. The American Commission on Teacher Education (ACTE) as cited by Vashist (2003), observes, “the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens. The quality of its citizens depends not exclusively, but in critical measure upon the quality of their education, the quality of their education depends more than upon any single factor, upon the quality of their teacher.” In the view of Rani (2017), the following amongst others constitute impediments to teacher education.

Objectives of Teacher Education

The following amongst others are the objectives of Teacher Education in Nigeria as stated by FRN (2013)

- To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- To encourage further, the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- To enhance teachers’ commitment to the teaching Profession.

Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The following amongst others are some of the problems bedeviling teacher education:

- issues of monitoring of Teacher education institutions

- deficiencies in selection procedures
- lack of regulations in Demand and supply
- deficient in facilities for students
- inadequacy of facilities for professional development
- problem of practice teaching
- problem of supervision of teacher

These aforementioned problems and many others not stated herewith, if not tackled has the potential of derailing the teacher education objectives as stated in the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2013) in her national policy on education, 6th edition

Panacea to Teacher Education Problems in Nigeria

- Teacher education institutions should be put under stern control of relevant agency in the Ministry of Education for the selection of teachers, students and provisions of good infrastructure and facilities, amongst others.
- Activities of teacher education institutions should be x-rayed from time to time and strict action taken if they fall short of expectations
- Affiliation criteria should be made strict.
- Educational institution and teacher certification awarding bodies should be equipped with facilities for organizing various types of activities such as daily assembly programmes, community living, social work, library organization and other curricular activities, which promote democratic spirit of mutual appreciation and fellow feeling.
- Selection procedure must be improved and standardized whereby interviews, group discussions along with common entrance test will be incorporated in the school activities at the entrance point.
- Educational institutions should be graded according to the standards of the institution and admission should be allowed in like manner.
- Curriculum of teacher training programme should be revised regularly according to changing needs of society.
- The quality of teacher training programme should be up-graded. Teacher education programme should be raised to a university level and that the duration of programme should be appropriately enhanced. This will in addition to improving the standard, encourages students to enrol in it.

Teacher Professional Learning in Nigeria

Teachers as the bedrock of a nation needs to empower themselves academically to be able to disseminate knowledge to their students. The ability to properly discriminate knowledge to students requires the teacher to acquire additional knowledge and degrees which is relevant and will contribute to the improvement of their Alma Mater. Emphasis here is on the school setting where the teacher is engaged to teach students. Additional qualification and degrees in the teaching profession will galvanize the teacher and enhance his/her teaching proficiency in the school setting. The enhancement of his/her capability will by

extension leads to the development of the school and community at large. Additional qualification entails an upgrade of his/her already acquired degree in teaching. It is pertinent to note that additional degree builds in confidence in the teacher when discharging his duties and also makes him/her grounded in his/her subject area; which leads to high proficiency and effectiveness in the school setting.

Teacher professional learning also reflected in the professional course mastered for the purpose of teaching in the school; seminars and workshops attended to improve his/her pedagogical content knowledge, his/her Information and Communication Technology knowledge etc. which will assist him/her in discharging his duties in the school. Course learnt and mastered by the teacher includes those taken in the teachers training colleges and institutions that cater primarily for the training of teachers. Courses in this regard are aimed at transforming the teacher and making him/her more efficient and effective when dealing with students in the school setting.

Also, teacher professional learning arises as a result of mentoring and coaching received by the teacher in and out of school setting. Mentoring according to Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (2018) involves “pairing young people with an older peer or volunteer, who acts as a positive role model”. EEF went further to state that “in general, mentoring aims to build confidence, develop resilience and character, or raise aspirations, rather than to deliver specific academic skills or knowledge”. This goes to show the relevance of mentoring in all sphere of human endeavour. The EEF in shedding more light on the relevance of mentoring, stated that “mentors typically build relationships with young people by meeting with them on a regular basis over a sustained period, either during school, at the end of the school day, or at weekends. This act of coaching helps in moulding the classroom teacher to a more “finished product” capable of standing his or her ground in discharging his duties and showing himself as someone who knows his/her “onions” in the subject area. This new personality attained by the teacher as a result of mentoring creates in him/her a sense of belonging in the school and community as a whole. Teachers in this category are able to communicate and liaise with the school and community where the school is located and thus, the problems associated with community learning are avoided.

Community learning deals with a situation whereby the school involves itself in the extension of education and development to the local community where it is located. Community learning is a term used to show the host community that the school authority is interested in their wellbeing and is willing to do anything to see that such is achieved within the capability of the school. The process of community learning requires all hands to be on deck for a smooth operation in the community. Community learning can only be effective and successful when the local residents are trained and incorporated in the activities of the school. In this regard, the need to involve students and parents is inevitable. If students of the school show dedication and parents and residents of the community show determination also; hence the need to carry all, especially the residents along in the community learning process. In addition, collaborative learning within the school setup is a sine qua non. It is aim at encouraging unity in diversity in the school system. In the view of Dillenbourg (1999) collaborative learning entails a situation whereby “two or more

people learn or attempt to learn something together. In this case, knowledge and experience are shared amongst participants in the learning, hence knowledge is gained and it is reflected in the school and students' performance in academic activities.

Teacher Education and Professional Standard in Nigeria

Teacher education is an education given to teachers that is aimed at making them attain certain knowledge and skills needed to impact school and the general society. It entails a situation whereby training specialized training is given to a particular set of people to be able to carry out a certain defined tasks, especially in the school setting. The education of teacher can be pre-service - in which case it happens before they are engaged in the teaching profession; in-service or on-the-job training, which has to do with professionalization of teachers while already employed in the teaching profession (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015). In the views of Adewuyi and Ogunwuyi (2002), teacher education is necessary because it trains and develop the teacher to be able to deliver on his or her subject area which in turn builds “the mental, physical and emotional powers of students”, which by extension produced a student that is capable of facing environmental challenges and positively contribute to the political process in the country. In his view, Oyekan (2006) posits that, “the purpose of teacher education is to produce well-qualified professional teachers that can adjust to the changing needs of the students and developmental prospects of the modern society”.

Professional standard helps to moderate the behaviour of teachers in the classroom and make them stand out amongst others as role model in the school system. In the opinion of the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act (1993), “the presence of professional standard for teachers helps to check ambiguity on the part of the teacher”. With this check in place, the school system will be able to achieve its stated objectives towards the students.

After much transformation has been experienced, the responsibility for certifying teachers in Nigeria was vested with the TRCN as stipulated in the Act forming the body in 1993. This Act stipulated who a teacher is and how and who is saddled with the responsibility for its certification. This process has been an ongoing one in the country for producing teachers. The various institutions responsible in this regard have been empowered, monitored and upgraded to train teachers to be effective and efficient. This process though has noble intention, has been defeated because of the decay in the institutional framework of such institutions. These setbacks in the training of teachers led to the strengthening of the TRCN in the country. The TRCN under the present Executive Director, Professor Steve Nwokeocha decided to conduct professional qualifying examinations for all education students across the country with particular focus on certification of those that passed the professional examination and the organization of annual seminar and conferences like the Africa Federation of Teaching and Regulatory Authorities (AFTRA) for teachers across the country.

Purpose of Professional Standard

The following amongst others are the purpose of professional standard as enumerated by Nwokeocha (2016)

- Quality standardization and control at local, national and international level – this entails not only teacher quantity but also quality
- Professionalization of teaching due to its critical nature in teacher status – states and countries that are unable to do this may find it convenient to keep treating teachers as mere civil servants whereas we expect teachers to be treated exactly as the medical, legal, engineering and other well-founded professionals. If teachers must be treated like other professionals, they must have identifiable standards that sets them apart from novices in terms of knowledge, skills, ethics and values
- Professionalization of teaching is critical for teacher reward and motivation – employers of teachers can know exactly what is being paid for
- Families/parents can get value for money spent on educating the child
- Professionalization of teaching is critical for teacher accountability – teachers can only be appraised, rewarded, reprimanded, given further training, etc based on the evaluation of his performance against generally accepted criteria/standards
- Enhances teacher mobility and better treatment across local, state, national and international boundaries
- Facilitates the work of teacher education institutions and provide framework for initial and advanced studies for teachers.

Conclusion

The paper is on impediments and panacea to teacher education and professional learning programme in Nigeria. The paper looked at the factors affecting teacher education and professional learning programme in Nigeria in spite of the establishment of different teacher certification institutions and educational agencies to mitigate poor churning out of teachers. The paper concluded that teacher education and professional learning programme is being affected by a myriad of factors which serves as a bottleneck to the improvement of teacher education and professional learning in the country

Suggestions

Arising from the conclusion, the paper suggested that; teacher education and professional learning programme should be given urgent attention by the government and factors affecting its improvement should be attended to by relevant agencies to enhance the programme and by extension improve national growth and development; as only qualified teachers will be involved in the teaching-learning process at various fields of endeavour in the country. This assertion gives credence to the belief that ‘teachers are the live wire of every society’, Nigeria inclusive.

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