

CHALLENGES OF THE TWENTY FIRST (21ST) CENTURY: EMERGING ISSUES IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Teacher Education has been accorded great value in Nigeria and its significance cuts across all the sub-sectors of Nigeria's society. This paper examines a number of emergent issues in Teacher Education in Nigeria vis-à-vis globalization in the 21st century. Teacher Education should be re-positioned to meet global challenges in the area of educational management, (raining and re-training). It suggests ways to make Teacher Education more relevant and efficient as well as self-sustaining.

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the 21st century, a number of issues emerged that directly affect education in Nigeria. These include, among others, the emerging needs for educational provisions to minority groups living in both rural and urban areas, the need to improve the quantity and quality of educational facilities to promote sustainable development, the necessity to improve on existing structures and quality of educational manpower and the urgency of the need to revisit education content and adopt pragmatic approaches to execute educational plans. Generally speaking, the challenges brought about by various economic, social and technological changes in the 21st century, have and are still making demands on education in the area of organization, administration and improvement in the methodology of teaching. This may entail an entire review and re-assessment of the content of the country's Teacher Education Programme. This places Teacher Education in Nigeria today at a cross road: it is a period during which the current globalization has resulted in a number of challenges than any other period in the history of Teacher Education in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include: the improvement of Teacher Education in the face of international challenges and development in technology, the demand for technical competence and improved content delivery as well as anchor emerging trends in education in our schools and colleges. Others include the exchange of educational ideas, commodities and culture globally by means of educational exchanges and programmes. It is to be noted with the 21st century came various forms of changes in culture. Teacher Education should envisage and adapt to some of the changes and challenges of the present millennium. There is the need for improvement in current curriculum design approaches and the integration of new reforms and ideologies which are globally inclined for the sake of national development and a sustainable educational system. Teacher Education has to undergo changes in order to be more practical and more

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relevant to the realities of the present world. Considering the outstanding changes in the 21st century, Teacher Education must be so planned as to result in the successful actualization of its goals. The quality of education and commitment of the teacher to ensure the success of all educational reforms are crucial aspects of all reforms implementation activities, The expansion of education ultimately is, to bring about quality outcomes. This demands more and more teachers. At present there is an increase in employment opportunities in teaching as well as improved wages globally. Teaching is becoming an attractive profession, especially at the pre-university level the world over. In spite of this, there is a growing decline in the quality of teachers and their commitment to the profession in Nigeria. Thus, teaching jobs are gaining less recognition daily with regard to status in Nigeria

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Otite and Ogionwo (2006) stated that, a theory is a system of ideas used to throw more light on social issues for better clarification. The theoretical framework of this paper is that the current globalization has raised a number of issues in Teacher Education which are relevant to the Nigerian situation. The concern, at present is the motivation and influence of teachers in Nigeria in such a way that they can play their key role in terms of effecting social change in Nigeria. This is because of the importance attached to the value and role of Teacher Education in providing workable solutions and knowledge in a global era of social, political, economic and educational changes (Ritzer 2008). This paper has briefly surveyed emerging issues in Teacher education in the 21st century. It is based on the premise that Teacher Education in Nigeria cannot be insulated from current global issues and that the commitment of the teacher will serve as a panacea.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Just like any other profession, the teaching profession requires training and skills acquisition. This implies that before an individual becomes a teacher, that individual has to acquire pedagogical content knowledge and anchor necessary competencies that would qualify him to be a full-Hedged teacher (Shulman 1986). Considering the changes and challenges experienced in the century. Teacher Education Programmes need to be expanded to include training and re-training to enable teachers to be more committed to the profession. This implies building their capacity to face the present global changes and challenges. The teachers' preparation for social development, knowledge dissemination and their role as change agents will be unsuccessful without sound education. This can only be gained where Teacher Education standards are made to conform with current trends in globalization with emphasis on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications. To Anuforo (2007), Teacher Education is the training that begins with theories

and principles which form the foundation of educational pursuit in the teacher training programmes. The Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2004) acknowledges that, since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, it is committed to increasing the quality and competence of teachers. This therefore, means that, this sector of human training will be given great emphasis. Furthermore, that may explain why the goals of Teacher Education in Nigeria were stated as follows: that at all levels of education in Nigeria there will be highly trained, competent and committed teachers; teachers will acquire valuable skills for social integration and positive contribution to the wellbeing of members of society and the Nation at large; the training will be to enhance commitment to teaching, encourage and build the spirit of enquiry and creativity in the country. Teacher Education might be formal or informal: it involves all forms of activities and experiences that help the trainees to assume the responsibility of the teaching profession in any academic community.

TEACHER EDUCATION AT CROSSROADS IN THE 21ST CENTURY IN NIGERIA

The Nigeria's 21st century Teacher Education policy includes aspects of past policies. That is why Ekwueme and Igwe (2001) stated that: there are presently two systems of education that produce qualified teachers in Nigeria, namely, the Colleges of Education and the Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities. These have remained the major for training teachers for a very long time in Nigeria. However, the Federal Government of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2004, p. 40) endorsed that the following institutions, among others, shall give the required professional training to teachers and prospective teachers in Nigeria. Colleges of Education; Faculties of Education; Institutes of Education; National Teachers' Institute; Schools of Education in the Polytechnics; National Institute for Nigerian Language (NINLAN): and National Mathematical Centre (NMC). However, because of the nature of the recent challenges facing Teacher Education with respect to meeting the goals of modern society, especially scientifically and technologically, a number of issues have to be considered vis-à-vis Teacher Training programmes. These issues include: the issue of training, competence and dedication of teachers; job security, recognition and preferences for the teaching profession in the global community; issues of teachers' social welfare, professionalism and recruitment techniques which need to be aligned with the principles and ethics of the teaching profession. Furthermore, educationists and scholars are of the view that there should be a shift: from the present practice to new approaches, which may help in tackling the problems which are currently militating against Teacher Education in the 21st century, Adegoke (2001). In Ekwueme and Igwe (2001 p. 26), identified some of the areas that

require a shift as follows: Teacher-centered to resource oriented learning; Teacher-centered to computer based learning; Group to individually paced work, closed/open systems without formal parameters; Provider to user-centered curricula, Factual work to performance-based learning contexts; Isolated to networked environments One-way to interactive teaching; Local and national to global contexts; Single subject mastery to broad integrated education with specializations; Change resistant to anticipatory educational management. The global trend poses challenges to every sector of human endeavour. These challenges are felt more in the teaching industry and the schools which are core sectors of human and societal development. This brings us to a turning point in the teaching profession in Nigeria. Our educational system and Teacher Education programme should have a new orientation; they should shift from the present status quo to a new one in order to meet global challenges via a strong, committed, efficient and professionally competent teaching force.

CONSTRAINTS FACING TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The quality of teaching in education depends on the teacher's commitment and their competence. These factors are further enhanced by available instructional materials and modern strategies for utilizing the instructional materials. Others include managerial factors and infrastructural development. Presently in Nigeria, the competence of teachers is not reflected in their classroom performance. This resulted from a low level of commitment on the part of the teachers. Some of the reasons for the lack of commitment by teachers are as follows: employment and admission into teaching profession and courses for study are not based on merit and interest. These results in recruiting people without interest in the job and students who are not ready to undergo the required professional training on programme; inadequately trained teachers or teachers who are not professionally trained and are not capable of developing desirable changes in the society. This is the nature of the teaching industry today in the 21st century Nigeria, with the new scheme of education, (the Universal Basic Education) the demand for teachers has risen astronomically. At present there exists a wide gap between the availability of qualified and well trained teachers on one hand and the required number of teachers in Nigerian schools on the other; modernization today requires total commitment on the part of teachers and a wide range training of teacher competencies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's Teachers Education programmes should ensure high quality management, excellent practice in teaching, and to ensure quality goal achievement by means of assessing the product and procedures. The programmes should promote competence-based education by emphasizing

pragmatic approaches with specific goals and strategies for achieving them. This will involve parents, teachers, government and all other stakeholders in the education sector. Teacher Education programmes should be geared toward achieving broad objectives and instruction especially through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It should revert to ICT-based teaching and learning. This will promote high quality of content delivery in our educational system at all levels of learning. In trying to adjust to the present situation of Teacher Education programmes, there should be a shift from mere theoretical conception of contextual meaning of issues and ideas to more pragmatic approaches. These would be achieved through a complete consideration of the issues raised in this paper. The following measures are suggested for implementation: the teaching profession should be made more attractive with proper remuneration and related incentive packages, entry qualification should be strictly based on teaching and the teacher's qualification to ensure competence, dedication and commitment positive attitudes to teaching should be developed in the teachers and teacher trainees during their training and practical teaching periods, the relevance of in-service, workshops, training and re-training of teaching personnel should be stressed. In other words, teachers should not be considered as finished products but should have their knowledge and skills periodically updated, considering the needs and demands of modern society. Teacher education programmes have to be restructured by initiating ethics and standards in conformity with international specifications. Conclusion In view of the complexity of the global economy, there is need to improve the quality of Teacher Education in Nigeria. This is because education, culture and politics influence states and nations of the world. In Nigeria, the teaching profession is in the forefront of social development. It is a strong force that would ensure national development. There is therefore, the need for teacher educators and the profession itself to take the necessary steps towards ensuring high responsibility in teachers for the sake of manpower development for Nation building. It is therefore, necessary for Teacher Education programmes to recognize the demands and realities of the times so as to enable emerging citizens to adequately meet the global challenges in the various facets of life in the society.

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