

TEACHERS' MANDATE
ON EDUCATION
AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IN NIGERIA

Edited by

D. F. Elaturoti
and
Kola Babarinde

Teachers' Mandate on Education
and Social Development in
Nigeria

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Repositioning Teaching and Teacher Education in Nigeria

By

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Abstract

The art of teaching and the position of teachers in Nigeria today call for evaluation and immediate review. This is because teaching is a very important tool for all round development of every nation and teachers as the vehicle plays an important role in ensuring learners' success. The quality and availability of teachers have great implications on any educational system as the quality of education the learner receives depends largely on this. While teaching is an attempt to bring about desirable change in human learning, the teachers hold the trump cards to proper education and those entrusted to develop the head, heart and hands of others. In Nigeria today, pupils and teachers operate under very harsh conditions. The image of teaching is still very low even with the recent increase in salaries. Poor funding and facilities, incessant strikes, dearth of local and current books are few of the problems being faced. Repositioning teaching and teacher education in Nigeria will go a long way to provide solutions to these problems. Teachers and trainers should be fully

involved in the on-going systematic innovative and qualitative reforms of education and emphasis should also be on organising and funding adequate training programmes for teachers. This paper examines the current positions of teaching and teacher education in Nigeria, highlighting the inadequacies in this area. Efforts have been made to offer suggestions on how teaching and teacher education could be repositioned in Nigeria.

Introduction

The whole business of teaching, schooling and learning is to make learners better-informed citizens who will be equipped to transform their society. The different fields of study such as: education, arts, languages, science, applied sciences; all endeavour to make life better for man.

However, for learners to achieve success, to a large extent, the most important factors outside the learner is the teacher. No matter what the prevailing learning environment could be and by the nature of the learner, the teacher still looms larger than any other prerequisite inputs for effective learning to take place.

Adegbile (2003) points out that the development of student in terms of the quality of education he receives depends largely on the quality of the various teachers to whom he is exposed. The implication of the foregoing is that teachers are one of the most important factors in the teaching-learning process. For a more effective teaching-learning activity other factors that could be considered include teacher availability, teacher quality and teacher commitment. Teacher availability, means overall teacher/pupils ratio, that is, the number of learners that a single teacher has to manage at any given time. Teacher quality is considered in terms of level of general education and professional training. Teacher commitment and integrity has to do with the conduct of teachers.

The foregoing is an attempt to explain why this paper is addressing the repositioning of teaching and teacher education in Nigeria as a major issue. This attempt is highly essential in order to intimate the teachers with the current positions of teaching and teacher education. This attempt could also influence the policy makers into taking a better step to improve the present conditions in the teaching profession.

What is Teaching and Who is a Teacher?

Teaching is the art and science of using various strategies or methods in any situation to make learners learn or facilitate learning. Okorie (1979) noted that Van Dalen and Brittel (1959) believed teaching to be "the guidance of pupils through planned activities so that they may acquire the richest learning possible from their experiences". While Clark and Starr (1967) saw teaching as "an attempt to help someone's skills, attitude, knowledge, idea or appreciation". Despite all these, Okorie also viewed teaching as both arts and science, which involves the acquisition of knowledge through the active participation of the learner when he/she is guiding or helping other persons to learn.

From a philosophical point of view, a realist educator strongly influenced by Pestalozzi Johann F. Herbart while criticising what he characterised as the atomistic curriculum of his day, believed that teaching should be multilateral. From an analytic philosophical point of view, teaching is a "polymorphous" activity and successful teaching brings about desired learning. The desired learning could either result from conditioning or indoctrination (Ozmon and Graver, 1976). Teaching is an attempt to bring desirable changes in human learning, abilities and behaviour so as to influence the learners to make those desirable changes in their behaviour that contribute to better living (Olaitan and Agusiobo, 1982). Commenting on MacDonal's model, Moronkola, Akinsola and Abe (2000) noted that teaching is depicting personality system. The student performs task-related activities and behaviour which result in learning, while instruction is the social system in which formal teaching and learning processes occur. This involves principally the teacher as well as the learner and the curriculum and the social system culminating in a plan for instruction.

It would seem obvious to discern who a teacher is after the previous review of experts' opinions on teaching. For the purposes of clarity a teacher is one who engages in the activity of bringing about learning in a pupil (Osuji, 1996). Teachers are those holding trump cards to proper education and those entrusted to develop the head, heart and the hands of others (Okolie, 1991). A teacher is one at the centre of the success of any educational programme no matter the quality of learning activities blueprints, learning materials and available prevailing physical facilities (Moronkola, 1999). Also, Smithrin (2000) showed concern about the quality of

teaching with the following; how to teach, what to teach and why we teach. Several experts documented the following indispensable or essential qualities to be seen in a teacher. These are patience, courage and impartiality, yet the teacher requires caring, humility and imagination. These three qualities are needed to support further attributes "habits of mind" - abilities to savour experience and to live within the tension of paradox.

The work of teachers in school is more than teaching, educating, assessing, counselling and innovation. Certain skills, techniques and attitudes can be defined to be part of the training received in institutions training teachers; others are communication, continuing consensual work in a school community. A teacher's work must be seen as part of social activities and democratic participation in every society.

Current Position of Teaching and Teacher Education

Teaching as a profession and teachers during the military rule suffered greatly in terms of recognition and remuneration. The advent of democracy in the country has not brought about remarkable changes in the art and science of teaching. This is because the learning environment at all levels of education in the country is poor.

Granted that few primary schools were rehabilitated in some selected schools by the federal government through UBE, the scenario in each school introduces another dimension for critical reflection. A visit to these schools shows that the rehabilitated classroom building are far from standard and that since not all the buildings in the school are rehabilitated, it vividly portrays what is lacking in each school and further introduce class consciousness and psychological complex among children and teachers who inhabit dilapidated and rehabilitated classes.

Fayose (2003) noted that pupils and teachers in Nigeria today operate under very harsh conditions, as the classroom situation is appalling as many are overcrowded, without doors, which make children share their classrooms with reptiles, goats and birds.

The image of teaching as a profession is still very low compared with other professions. Except in few states of the federation, teachers are still not paid regularly. However, in the new political dispensation, the increase in salaries of workers has empowered many teachers at all levels to own personal cars and

houses. This, no doubt, has boosted the ego of teachers but has not removed societal disrespect for teaching as a profession.

Currently unlike in the past, public schools now have "trained" teachers and conscious effort is being made by government to employ mostly trained teachers whenever there is financial capacity to do so.

Balogun (1987) documented the structure of teacher education in Nigeria in a hierarchical order beginning with the Grade II Certificate followed by the Associate Certificate/Diploma in Education (ACE/ADE), then the National Certificate in Education (NCE), the bachelor degrees (B.Ed or B.A/B.Sc Education), the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), and even higher degrees in Education.

In the present day Nigeria, apart from Associate Certificate in Education, all other types of teacher preparation and all other forms of teacher education still exist. However, the following salient fundamental and perennial questions, which Balogun, (1987:149) identified, are still staring our faces begging for answers. These include the following:

- How can we maintain a proper balance, in terms of content and time allocations, between the various components at any level of our teacher education programme?
- Do we, and how can we, relate the various components to one another?
- Do we need the foundations as the general studies of education, or should we have them specific to the teaching subjects, for example psychology of teaching and learning of some studies, history and philosophy of social studies or both?
- How can the problems of overlap for example, education psychology, general methods, and special methods courses be overcome?
- Is it indeed desirable to seek to overcome the overlap at all?
- At what stage in the NCE and B.Ed programmes should the student-teacher be introduced into the profession, and how?
- What is the optimum duration for teaching practice?
- Would this optimum duration be the same at all levels of student-teachers, if not, why?

- To what extent is the present content of each of the courses really relevant to the modern needs of the profession (continuous assessment etc)?
- Do different or new bases exist for teacher education?

Apart from the persisting problems listed above, of great concern are the problems of poor funding, poor facilities, incessant strikes, dearth of local and current books, few research works on teacher education, inability to enjoy quality in-service training for those who train teachers, poor quality of prospective teacher trainees, poor access to what happens in teacher education in other parts of the world, overcrowded teacher training institutions, poor supervisions, monitoring and evaluation of teacher training institutions.

Due to the enormous responsibility of teachers to the society, they must be properly trained or prepared to teach. Sharing the views of Cropley and Dave (1976), Osuji (1996:35) wrote that:

...teacher education requires special consideration while deliberating on any educational innovation because "teachers are important factor mediating the effect of educational services, institutions and systems". Also, the influence of teachers on the future personal, social and productive lives of pupils reflects, to a great extent, the professional training they have received.

The success or otherwise of any educational system rests to a large extent on teachers' effectiveness which also depends on the quality of their education. Teacher education is so important as the nation's development itself depends on education. This may have informed the Nigerian Government through its National Policy on Education in 1981 to note that teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all the nation's educational planning as no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (Akinmoyewa, 1994).

New Expectations from Teaching and Teacher Education in Nigeria

Of all the educational problems bedevilling African countries, the most persistent and compelling is training of competent teachers. This is because the demand for more and better schools in all parts

of the continent is very vital. The need to relate the curriculum to the child's environment as well as the overall problem of preparing the future citizens of Africa who will be fully committed to their environment, among others, cannot be fully accomplished without the aid of competent teachers (Fafunwa, 1980).

The authors agree with the over two decades opinion of Fafunwa and rationally projected that the opinion will last for several decades to come if not throughout the lifespan of each generation of man if teaching and teacher education are not properly addressed.

UNESCO (2003) reasoned that the processes of systematic and ongoing innovation and qualitative reforms of education as well as those required for learning to live together need the proactive support of teachers and trainers and are doomed to fail if they are not able to find it.

To reposition teaching and teacher education therefore, the following must be put in place in Nigeria:

Teaching

- All trained teachers must be registered by a well funded teachers' council to be managed by a team of practicing, retired and university lecturers and researchers in the field of education.
- All untrained teachers must be trained through in- service training programme.
- All current sandwich-training programmes in unbecoming locations must be streamlined. Training of teachers in many of these unbecoming conditions cannot attract public recognition of teaching as a profession. UNESCO (2003) noted that social recognition of teachers is indispensable and this includes the recognition of their teaching.
- Public schools especially at the primary or secondary level must be well funded and maintained. This is with a view to improving the current working conditions of teachers.
- Teachers must be well supervised by appropriate government agencies and those found lagging behind in their professional duties must be corrected, warned or sanctioned.
- Teachers at all levels must be exposed to at least a short period in-service training once in two years. Such training

will ensure continuous professional training and growth and must be a prerequisite for promotion.

- Periodic interaction between ministry of education officials, university teachers and researchers in education, education officers in education -based agencies and practicing teachers to find solutions to current problems in teaching profession and make futuristic decisions should be institutionalised.

Teacher Education

Repositioning teacher education is a task for all stakeholders as there are many daunting inbuilt problems in today's teacher education institutions in the country. Such problems include moral decadence, poor funding, obsolete teaching materials, poor remuneration, unfit teacher trainees, poor teaching practice exercise, and unstable academic calendar.

Many problems confronting teacher education can be categorised under three main concerns of education all over the world as postulated by Aborishade (2002) namely; access, quality and cost. However, the interpretations of these issues are not fully the same in the content of Borishade's discussion. This is understandable, as Borishade was not discussing teacher education.

- *Access to Teacher Education:* Education is a right of everybody but the gates to teacher education in Nigeria must have gatekeepers who are not sleeping on duty. Often times, all manners of people with low qualifications, perhaps, morals or personality find access to teacher education. A review of admission process in Grade II, B.Ed external degree programmes of many Colleges of Education, the Postgraduate Diploma in Education programme and Universities are a shadow of what we expect potential teacher trainees to be.

What always agitate the minds of the writers are, what will be the public impression and future productivity of these trainees? So, to reposition teacher education, potential teacher trainees must have high scores and grades and must be people of high moral standard vouched for by respectable members of the society or teaching profession.

- *Quality of Training.* Traditional methods of teaching and learning cannot produce the changes we desire. Putting more students in classes to increase access though may lower cost, it also do lower quality (Borishade, 2002).

There must be a conscious effort to increase the quality of teacher education through provision of conducive learning environment as Moronkola (2003) noted that school environment must be stimulating, interesting, pleasant, with well laid out buildings painted and ventilated. Current teaching materials especially textbooks and ICT hardware and software, libraries, laboratories should be provided. Trainees according to UNESCO (2003) must be associated with the process of devising educational change, self-change, meeting new challenges of HIV/AIDS and strengthening abilities to deal simultaneously with features of local culture and the opening -up to universal value and horizons.

The mode of dressing of teacher trainees especially among full time students in Colleges of Education and Universities as well as the level of seriousness attached to the conduct of teaching practice must be seriously looked into as the current situation does not portray a good start for the envisaged better tomorrow.

- *Cost:* Training of good quality teachers demand better funding. Teacher education should not be viewed only in terms of teaching but also research and publication component. Therefore, all stakeholders principally the government must be interested more in funding teacher education. Corporate organisations should also have bursary awards for undergraduates majoring in the field of education if we are reasoning that the trainee teachers of today are going to teach tomorrow's prospective tertiary institution candidates for various disciplines.

Conclusion

It is very clear from the efforts made in this paper to explicate on the present status of teaching and teacher education in Nigeria that many problems abound. Despite the fact that teaching is a very important profession, it is rather disheartening to notice that it

is being taken for granted; it is not being accorded the appropriate prestige or respect. If it is true that the essence of teaching is to change learners' behaviour in desired directions, then, Nigeria has a very long way to go in this regard. The truth of the matter is that if something is fundamentally wrong with teaching or teacher education, the possibility of changing learners' behaviour in desired directions is very slim. This simply implies that in order to have a change in learners' behaviour, the teaching profession or teacher education should be refurbished. If it is not adequately overhauled, all the efforts to succeed in the teaching profession will be nothing but an exercise in futility.

However, efforts have been made in this paper to examine the current positions of teaching and teacher education in Nigeria. And it is obvious that this area has a lot of inadequacies. In view of this, efforts have also been made to offer suggestions on how teaching and teacher education could be repositioned with our emphasis on adequate training programme.

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Higher education in Nigeria is in crisis, and so are the people who administer them. The former is a crisis in a political sense, the latter is a crisis of political attitude. We shall examine these in turn, and finally indicate the political context in which they exist. The sorry state of higher education in Nigeria has been well documented in newspaper articles, learned journals, and several reports of government-sponsored panels. Therein are details of poor funding, dilapidated buildings, poor or non-availability of basic infrastructure, poor or absence of teaching-learning equipment, and to state the obvious, the quality of the teaching staff is poor. This paper was originally written in honour of Prof. K. J. Odeh (Akwu) in connection with the end of a successful 8-year tenure as Provost of FCE, Abokuta (1991-1999).