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Induction of Teachers in Nigeria: A Legal License for Vitiated Professionals

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Abstract:

Teaching has come a long way in Nigeria spanning centuries but her status as a profession has continued to generate controversies. There are standard admission requirements for entry, period of internship, a code of conduct for those who identify with her and a council that is responsible for her administration and control. The profession has been riddled with illegalities in spite of unambiguous guidelines set up for its practice. This has resulted in compromise, bastardisation and lowered credibility. This paper considered the growth and development of teaching in Nigeria, the attendant challenges in the face of the law and the gaps that need to be filled before it can be regarded as fully professionalized. It was concluded that so much still needs to be done as recommendations were made to the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria, teachers' unions, and ministries of Education and teacher preparation institutions on how to make the teaching profession occupy her enviable position in concomitant with other professions.

Keywords: Teaching, Induction of Teachers, Legal license, Debased professionals

Introduction

Good education is the best legacy any nation can bequeath to her citizenry. This is no less a reason why the national policy on education document, stated as part of the objectives of education that, learners are expected to develop skills that could enable them to be self-reliant and have knowledge based understanding that will make them useful to the society (FGN, 2015). It is as well reiterated in the same document that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teachers play pivotal roles in the success of any educational system. They are responsible for the implementation of the curriculum in order to achieve stated educational objectives. If education in Nigeria as a nation will be adjudged as good, the system of her training of teachers, certification, recruiting and practice of teaching must be dynamic, efficient and effective. The curriculum of teacher education until recent time seem not to be properly designed and implemented in line with the overall educational objectives of the nation. Teacher induction and

certification is still not perfectly regulated. Teacher education, certification and licensing cannot be handled with levity because teaching has become more dynamic than ever before. It is a truism, that education system all over the world improves by the day and works towards getting the best results and Nigeria as a member of the world community cannot afford to be an exception.

Teacher Education Curriculum

In designing the curriculum for teacher education, the focus is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge, information, attitudes, conducts and skills by teachers such that they make their learners better members of the society. How much of these qualities they ought to possess and demonstrate is subject to much discussion in many nations of the world. Consequently, when these values are developed during the process of professional practice of teaching, it will help the learners they teach acquire the right information, attitudes and

skills that modify active and relevant behaviour in their society and economy.

The curriculum of teacher education can be divided into four major areas: first, the knowledge of the contents that are foundational to education as they relate to features of subjects like Philosophy, History, Psychology and Sociology. Second, this refers to areas of skills that use technology in assessing and improving teaching and learning that favour those with special needs. Third, this deals with the subject matter, methods, knowledge and skills which essentially include regular ways of teaching and evaluating particular subjects. It may have a connection with the first, which is "foundational" even as there are growing debates on whether or not it is possible for a teacher to predict the kind of understanding and skills pupils will need when they enter adult life, or the kind of understanding and skill such a teacher should have to be successful in contemporary classrooms. Accordingly, there is emphasis on 'diagonal' or 'horizontal' skills that encourage forward looking concepts that make students learn about 'how to learn' which is also referred to as 'social competences'. The acquisition of these skills justifies the need to question some traditional ways of designing the curriculum of teacher education so that there will be improvement and progress. Fourth, the aspect of teaching practice in the classroom setting or other forms of educational exercise whether as field observations, student teaching or internship as practised and supported in some ways (though not always) in United States of America. For the purpose of this paper, only the fourth aspect will be discussed.

Teaching Practice

This is the aspect of the teacher education programme that is designed for student teachers/trainee teachers for the opportunity to learn and acquire essential pedagogical skills in real life classroom settings (Dada, 2019). Acquisition of teaching skills is achieved in three basic ways in Nigeria. First, it could be in form of passing requisite examinations attached to the level of teaching strata an activity that requires that teacher candidates or pre-service teachers should be assigned to teach and be supervised for a few weeks in the classroom of a formal school (e.g. by lecturers from the university or other teacher education institutions). Second, it could be in form of student practicum; an activity which also requires that a pre-service teacher be supervised within a miniature classroom (e.g. micro teaching). Third, the professional practicing teacher is expected to register and sit for the official and national qualifying examination organised and supervised by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). This is the final stage of teacher preparation and the certificate obtained therefrom is supposed to serve as "the license tenable" anywhere in Nigeria or elsewhere for professional practice.

As professional teaching gets more sophisticated in Nigeria, there are increasing and compelling demands for the "qualified teacher" who will not settle for anything less than a practice that is backed by law to sift, in the words of Obanya, (1982) the "teachers" from the "cheaters". He should transmute into an individual equipped and certified as a leader and motivator to make the contemporary learners acquire critical thinking skills, promote creativity in the learner, impart relevant skills in them, nurture social responsibility in the learners and prepare them to adapt to an ever changing world as lifelong learners. How best to achieve these in today's ever changing and ever demanding environments, is a subject of debate that gets interesting and creative by the day. The aspect of teaching practice is highly important in teacher education programmes because it is the practical training aspect that allows the teacher trainee to acquire necessary skills that will make him/her to be efficient on the job later in life. If teaching will compete favourably with other professions, there is the need to raise the present standard through ethical and professional practices (Dada, 2019)

Recruitment of Teachers

Recruitment of teachers is as important as teacher education itself because recruiting the wrong/incompetent teachers will do as much harm as not given the right attention to teacher education. According to Amoran (2014), teacher politicians, ethnocentric educational planners and opportunists are at the root of the current inability of teaching to get fully professionalized in Nigeria.

Political appointees take advantage of the vulnerability of teaching as a profession (with the erroneous thought that anybody can teach), to load the teaching workforce with “all comers” who are not genuinely interested in teaching but are frustrated into it by unemployment. They use such recruitment as a way to fulfil their electoral promises or in a subtle way of showing benevolence to friends, family or school mates. This is unacceptable and inimical to the profession of teaching. The process of teacher recruitment should be objective, free of undue favour and based only on competence. Factors such as qualifications, knowledge of subject matter, communication skills, passion for the job and required competences among others should be considered and adhered to by the authority in charge of recruitment.

Induction of Teachers

Since teaching refers to the practice of applying a wide body of knowledge acquired and used procedurally in effective ways for instructing different kinds of learners on subject matters, it requires teachers who are ready to undertake complex sets of tasks every minute to achieve set goals for teaching. Many teachers consider their experiences in the early years in the profession as stressful and demanding because they found out that they were in teaching, not because they have passion for it but for circumstances beyond their control. Many teachers leave the profession after their first teaching posting and there are many others who decide not to go back to it after completing their initial training or preparation. Ironically, the percentage of those in this category is high. The Teachers’ Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) has put a policy in place in Nigeria to induct new teachers into the teaching profession (through unified examinations and award of certificates that serve as license for professional identity, development and competences). This is put in place to ensure that distinctions are made

between “the prepared” and “the unprepared” teachers.

Education policy for Teachers in Nigeria

Teacher training or preparation has become somewhat linked with politics in many countries and Nigeria is no exemption as the political players now decide on programmes that drive teacher education. The education systems are denied of the significant financial resources they require and this has started reflecting the value placed on preparation of people for life in the societies and cultures. The extents of political control over Teacher Education in Nigeria vary, but are apparently dominant. Technically, the design and application of teacher education content is entirely placed in the hands of universities, colleges of education, the National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) and the Teachers’ Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). but in practice, the political class uses it as a tool for reckless employment of unqualified and unprepared individuals as a way of fulfilling their electoral promises****. There are still irregularities, such as pre-service teachers being taught to use teaching methods considered to be inappropriate and obsolete by persons with little or no skills in the handling of teaching infrastructure that can cope with the 21st century classrooms. Learners who find themselves in this kind of situation are bound to suffer for it.

The major challenge facing teaching as a profession in Nigeria today is that of promoting quantity to the detriment of quality. This is especially so as the profession required an estimated target of 1.7 million new teachers for Universal Primary Education and as at year 2015. This was not realised and the figure increases year in, year out.

Issues in Teacher Education

In the times past, teacher education emphasised skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic and a body of information considered essential for everyone. According to Roblyer and Doering (2013), educators now believe that the world is changing too quickly to define the education in terms of specific information or skills. It should focus on more general capabilities, such as “learning to learn” skills that will help the citizens cope with inevitable technological changes as they occur. Even as educators try to agree that changes in our educational methods are needed to respond to modern challenges, not every one of them agrees on

which strategies will serve today's educational goals.

The need for inclusion of a clear and enormous picture of and precise capabilities for all teachers in modern day classroom is one of the prominent issues and challenges of Teacher Education. Contemporary teachers therefore, need to recognise that there is a necessity for variety in classroom activities to ensure that needs of learners and their range of diversities are met. This is no less a reason why Mangal and Mangal (2012), while discussing the suitability of communication contents, opined that what is to be communicated in the communication process should be appropriate both on the part of the teacher and the learners and the communicated material should have a definite purpose, cohesiveness and appropriations in the light of the objectives set and the situation prevalent at the time of communication.

Therefore, if teacher education would accept the challenges of the 21st century teaching and learning environment, it is important for those saddled with the responsibility of training teachers to update their curriculum planning to accommodate the following professional abilities.

Research: this in a way refers to academic investigations that always examine and clarify matters relating to teacher education, the reality of what they teach, scholarly abilities to suggest various hypotheses, problem solving in education, generation of innovation, and dealing with tasks in the field of education. One other issue that is paramount here is that a proper link between research institutions and the schools should be created in order to allow for proper utilisation of research findings. It is often said that many of our research findings end up in the shelves in the institutions where such research are carried out. Concerted efforts should be made to see that schools utilise research findings from teacher training institutions.

Strategic planning: this in essence makes the teacher an expert who has strong self- control, abilities for organisation, supervision and evaluation. He is concerned about intelligent and material supplies for learning of curricular matters and his achievement as a teacher is made manifest in his approach that is amenable to positive change in learning facilitation and development. He is also

able to confront doubt with resourcefulness.

Resilience: this is about teachers who always approach the future with optimism, in spite of challenging situations, by making vigorous changes that endure in difficult times. They should anticipate high accomplishment from all their learners as they seek to develop comprehensive plans that have varied teaching strategies and support systems.

Reflective Teaching: this is a form of practice that allows the teacher to be involved in self-examination and retrospective consideration of his/her teaching in order to improve his/her teaching and improve student learning. This in the long run can help teachers refine their teaching methods and adapt to innovations that can help improve student learning.

Teacher Education Programmes

Past studies have shown that teachers' understanding about teacher education programmes characterise an important phase in their admission into teaching as a vocation. It becomes critically challenging for the institutions offering teacher education therefore, to investigate and establish the philosophies of teaching and learning that demonstrate the interrelationships between the development of programmes and their content alongside the pedagogy of existing teacher education. Kagan (1992), Pajares (1992) and Wubbels (1992) were unanimous that it should also determine the extent to which they learnt what they are taught and how they have learnt them.

Continuous Professional Development of Teachers

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers is expected to enrich his/her career for between 30 and 40 years. Therefore, the initial courses or training programmes in teacher education cannot be sufficient. Hence, good and resourceful teacher preparation and development packed with pragmatic content is highly essential and needful for impactful teaching and learning for the 21st century. In Nigeria, attitude plays a prominent part in preparation of teachers as professionals. The inclusion of computer education as a technology tool for teaching has proven to be a step in the right direction. This has been proved by positive attitude

shown in research studies among educators in Nigeria towards technology-supported education programmes. In the opinion of Onasanya, Shehu, Oduwaiye and Shehu, (2010), many institutions involved in teacher preparation or training lack ICT facilities for instruction, research and effective classroom interactions.

These obvious flaws at various levels of the implementation of ICTs in Nigerian education, calls for arrangements that would ensure that undergraduate teachers are well informed and prepared for the implementation of a technology-supported learning that is modern and forward looking. Such preparation would form a good foundation for effective, efficient and globally acceptable practices for proper pre-service teacher preparation programme that can stand the test of time. In this study therefore, a window of new approach to teacher preparation programme is being opened through the proposal of knowledge of the law for content development in teacher preparation programme when reinforced by modern Educational Technology tools.

Towards Better Teaching and as a Noble profession:

Roget (2014) defined teaching as, “the act, process, or art of imparting knowledge and skill”. Teaching in this sense and as a process, refers to education, instruction, pedagogy, schooling, training, tuition, tutelage or tutoring. It could also mean a principle taught or advanced for belief, as by a religious or philosophical group vis-à-vis doctrine, dogma and tenet. Teaching involves all the activities that are made available in education and the individual who provides such activities in education is called a teacher. As a professional, a teacher, uses different methods to give the best knowledge to his students such that they can understand. This, he does to the best of his ability. He encourages his students as a matter of duty, to learn the subjects through congenial and mutual interaction. Both the teacher and the learner participate for mutual benefits chief of which is to have their objectives and targets achieved.

Robert (2010) noted that when there is diversity of instructional design, interactive activities, effective teaching strategies, and appropriate resource materials, effective teachers can be identified and selected. Such teachers:

- have high hopes for student learning;
- make provision for instruction that is well focused;
- closely monitor students’ learning progress;
- re-teach and use alternative strategies when children didn’t learn;
- make use of incentives and rewards to promote learning;
- engender highly efficient classroom routines;
- set and enforce high standards for classroom behaviour;
- maintain excellent personal interactions with students.

Many factors like individual characteristics, family and neighbourhood experiences contribute to student learning. However, research has proven that, teachers matter most among school-related factors. Therefore, effective teaching is central to the provision of a level playing field for the actualisation of learners’ full potentials. Teachers would be identified or adjudged as effective through their performance and not by their background or experience. This is because teachers, who are effective, remain effective even when they change schools. Identification of such teachers is not based on where they went to school, whether they are licensed, or for how long they have been teaching. In teaching therefore, three main aspects are prominent for learning to take place vis-à-vis the teacher, the students and education. When these three aspects are effectively synchronised, the profession of teaching becomes the better for it.

Conclusion

The submissions of this paper have shown that the induction of teachers in Nigeria and the consequent inability of government and the TRCN to fortify and strengthen the certificate of registration issued to them has watered down the credibility of its acclaimed professionalisation. As a professionally qualified workforce, teachers’ certification by the TRCN should serve as formidable legal license to shield their practice from unnecessary political adventurers and unfit entrants who debase the profession.

The recruitment of new teachers should go hand in hand with improved quality of teaching and learning. Quality education for all, calls for more and better trained teachers for improved pedagogical processes and the realisation of this fact lie at the

heart of quality education that is global and excellent.

Teachers (like other professionals) are expected to reflect upon their abilities as they go through the process of preparation, keep them up to date, and develop them to further national and global contribution to teaching and learning. How effective the different approaches are, varies and this in turn affect the way and manner education authorities support the process. There are suggestions that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities or programmes will get more effective when they are:

- designed and organised over time
- made collaborative
- committed to learning
- delivered pragmatically to teachers in groups
- inclusive of practice, coaching, and follow-up
- promoting reflective practice
- encouraging experimentation, and
- responsive to teachers' needs

Sylvia Chong, Isabella Wong and Quek Choon Lang (2004) have therefore advanced reasons for how to understand what pre-service teachers' beliefs are and the need to focus more on helping them articulate their views about the vocation of teaching. Such studies would certainly add value to their individual image built on the principle that, it is not enough to learn how to teach, but the consciousness of their own outlooks before taking up the responsibility of teaching must be considered if they are to become effective in the school system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made that:

The challenge of quantity must be overcome, while ensuring quality in order to develop institutional capacity for the preparation and development of a high quality teaching force through the Faculties of Education to guarantee "Education for All" by year 2030.

When the importance of teachers' beliefs have been acknowledged, teams of educators, researchers and administrators should make continuous and careful efforts to develop a multi-faceted and qualitative teacher education programme for the 21st century.

Researchers should be deliberate in their studies to demonstrate the essential roles the opinions of undergraduate teachers have to play in the

achievement and analysis of knowledge that is built into the teacher education programme.

Since the dearth of new, creative learner-centred teaching activities and practices may also be responsible for the continuation of old-fashioned and ineffective practices in the profession, more professionally qualified university teachers should be attracted to teaching as a profession.

Research about practices and issues in teacher education both at the local and global settings should be made to challenge teacher education institutions to make pragmatic adjustments that will raise the stakes of professional teaching.

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