

CHAPTER 5

Conceptualizing Teacher Education in Nigeria: The Counsellor's Perspective

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Preamble

Teacher education is a teacher preparation programme designed to produce professionally competent teachers in the education sector. Teacher education can either take the form of pre-service or in-service training. The goals of teacher education among many other things are to produce highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system. Many questions are raised concerning the status of teacher education and teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. These and many other unanswered questions suggest that there is a gap between the vision of teacher education concerning the practice and sustainability of teacher education in Nigeria. To address this gap, the counsellor's role of assisting students to distribute their energies into the many learning opportunities available to them must be improved. Counselling services such as orientation, appraisal, follow-up, placement, and many others must be provided to the teacher trainees before they are allowed to venture into the teaching profession.

Introduction

In every educational setting, the aim and objectives can only be achieved if the role of the teacher is properly structured and defined. According to Abiogu and Enemuoh (2017), every country's educational system ought to be a means of providing manpower at various levels of the economy on which modernization depends. A teacher is the architect who designs the superstructure on which education revolves. Teacher education has two broad perspectives; teacher trainees and teacher trainers. It is also structured into two broad training programmes; pre-service and in-service programmes.

Teacher education is a teacher preparation programme. It is the professional education of teachers that is aimed at the acquisition of attitudes, skills, and knowledge that are considered desirable and useful so that they can be made efficient and effective in the discharge of their work under the needs of society at any point in time. Ekpiken and Edet (2014) defined teacher education as the complex and complete procedure of educating or preparing persons whose profession is teaching to play their roles as teachers towards contributing to national development. Teacher education refers to policies and procedures aimed at providing prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they will need to perform their duties effectively in the classroom, school, and community (Yusuf 2022).

Teacher education occurs in stages with lots of activities which include training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on-the-job). Teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, both formal and non-formal sub-systems.

The history of teacher education in Nigeria dates back to the pre-colonial era. There has been tremendous improvement in the practice and administration of teacher education in recent times. Osokoya (2010) alluded to the fact that today, teacher education is much improved than it was before independence and a few decades thereafter.

The improvements are largely due to provisions in the various versions of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 1977, 1981, 1998, and 2004). These documents clearly stated the goals of teacher education to include the following:

- i. Producing highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- ii. Encouraging the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers
- iii. Helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- iv. Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
- v. Enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession

However, a clear assessment of the status of teacher education in Nigeria today as compared to the goals of Teacher education as envisioned by the National Policy on Education, many questions are seeking answers. For instance, are teachers in Nigeria today highly motivated to perform efficiently in the classroom? Today, are teachers encouraged to be creative? Are teachers giving the needed support to develop themselves both intellectually and professionally? Are teachers today, really committed to the teaching profession?

Many other unanswered questions suggest that there is a gap between the vision of teacher education concerning the practice and sustainability of teacher education in Nigeria. There is, therefore, the need for a total overhaul of the teacher education programme in terms of pedagogy, funding, training, and evaluation.

This suggests the need for a reconstruction of the entire teacher education programme in Nigeria both in terms of training and practice. There is a need for an overhaul of the teacher education approach as it relates to both the teacher trainees, the teacher trainers, and the administrator's perspective. This is therefore the basis for this chapter's contribution.

Teacher Education Training Institutions

In Nigeria, teacher education training courses are offered in different schools producing different levels of graduates. Some of the institutions that are statutorily charged with the responsibilities of training and retraining of teachers in Nigeria include:

Universities (Faculties of Education): train teachers by offering courses leading to the award of Bachelor of Education degree programmes. Universities also offer Master's and Doctorate programmes in education to produce advanced manpower in different fields. Universities are regulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC).

Colleges of Education: offer Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) training Programmes to produce manpower for primary and junior secondary schools (basic education) level. They are regulated by the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE).

The National Teachers' Institute (NTI): was established to provide refresher and upgrading courses for practicing teachers; organize workshops, seminars, and conferences as well as formulate policies and initiate programmes that would lead to improvement in the quality and content of education in the country.

Polytechnics: offering technical education courses at the diploma level for the production of teachers for technical and vocational colleges. They are regulated by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE).

The need for reconstructing Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria has evolved since its advent during the pre-colonial era. However, a critical look at the current structure in terms of training and practice in Nigeria indicates some noticeable gaps that require deliberate reforms that could make teacher education globally competitive.

It is observed that the training of the teacher in the teacher education institutions should be improved upon to cover a wide range of experiences and not only the aspect of teaching and learning in the classroom. The pedagogical strategies in teacher education institutions should have a more practical outlook. Teaching and learning should be more of a hands-on approach. Moreover, the teaching practice exercise which is a teacher preparation exercise should be improved upon. It is suggested that the time frame for a teaching practice exercise should not last less than a complete academic year or session.

Furthermore, there is a wide gap between the curriculum taught to teacher trainees and the reality that exists in the school environment. These gaps are in the areas of dilapidated school buildings, inadequate instructional materials (textbooks, writing materials etc), and large class sizes. These sometimes overwhelm newly qualified teachers especially when they are required to play multifarious roles to deal with these issues. Essentially, teacher preparation programmes are deemed excessively academic and remote from the real challenges confronting classrooms such as large class sizes, students with special needs, and infrastructural decay among many others.

Refocusing Teacher Education in Nigeria for Global Competitiveness

The process of reconstructing Teacher Education in Nigeria is a collective effort of all relevant stakeholders in the education sector. Areas that require reconstruction and better reforms include:

- i. Regular Recruitment of highly qualified teachers to teach in schools to produce quality programmes. This can be achieved by ensuring competitive salaries, financial subsidies for training, and uniformity in the design and quality of teacher preparation programmes as it is obtainable in developed and advanced countries.
- ii. Adoption of professional teaching standards to focus attention on the learning and evaluation of critical knowledge, skills, and disposition.
- iii. Reworking the conditions of service of teachers from time to time to be in line with what their counterparts working in other establishments and sectors are earning. The age-long adage of “*teachers’ rewards are in heaven*” should be reversed. Teachers' conditions of service should be improved to attract qualified persons to the teaching professions for skills acquisition.
- iv. There should be a well-designed and implemented incentive package for students enrolled in teacher education programmes. This will make teacher education attractive to the teacher trainees and the community at large.
- v. There is a need for improved budgetary allocations to teacher training institutions such as Universities, Colleges of Education, and polytechnics and agencies coordinating teacher training institutions such as Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education, and National Board for Technical Education.
- vi. There should be a more efficient use of resources, an increase in investment in education by strengthening institutions, promoting greater adoption of technology, building the capacities of teachers, and mobilizing additional financial resources through legal frameworks and deliberate intervention on a sustainable basis.
- vii. Admissions into teacher training institutions should be based on merit. Teacher training institutions should not be a dumping ground for candidates who could not secure admissions in other fields of study. In most cases, candidates who are deemed not fit to read courses like medicine, engineering, and the like are often transferred to faculties/institutes of education as the last resort. This practice should be abolished.
- viii. There is a need for routine capacity building of teachers to improve their performance and enhance their productivity. Teachers should pass through the process of certification and licensing by the appropriate body such as the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). This will help in curbing the menace of unqualified teachers who are already in the teaching field.
- ix. In line with the current global technological advancement, teacher education should be ICT-more driven.

The Role of Counsellors in improving teacher education

Teacher education is designed to provide adequate training to teacher trainees to make them effective in the discharge of their roles. Teacher trainees and in-service teachers should be exposed

to the basic rudiments of their profession to enable them to perform optimally in leadership and administrative positions

A significant function of education is to help students identify and develop their potentialities. The counsellor's role is to assist students in distributing their energies into the many learning opportunities available to them. On the job, school counselors: listen to students' concerns about academic, emotional, or social problems. Help students process their problems and plan goals and actions. Mediate conflict between students and teachers.

Counselling is a learning process in which a counsellor helps an individual or individuals learn, understand themselves and their environment, and be in a position to choose the right type of behaviours that will help them develop, grow, progress, ascend, mature, and step up, educationally, vocationally and socio personally. In other words, counselling is a transformative process of helping people to learn all that is to be learned both in and outside the school (Anyi, 2017).

To improve teacher education, counsellors provide the following services to the teacher trainees:

Orientation service: This is designed to assist students adjust adaptively when found in a new school environment for effective learning. The teachers should also be given orientation on how to handle the learners from time to time.

Information service: This service is designed to provide students with data about educational, social, and vocational opportunities. It involves the collection of data for students.

Appraisal service: Appraisal involves the collection, administration, interpretation, and clinical usage of a variety of test devices to provide effective counselling services to students.

Placement service: The goal of this service is to ensure that students achieve placement whether on programme of study, a career, work-study, or even a medical treatment programme.

Follow-up, research, or evaluation service: The goal of this service is to provide feedback on the effectiveness of school guidance through research into the concrete outcomes of the school guidance.

Referral service: This is sending a client to another person or agency for assistance where the counsellor is unable to solve the problem. The counsellor does not claim to know everything so the need for referral to other needs.

Teachers' Forum: The Teachers Forum is meant to gather all the teachers in the school to discuss teacher/student problems (Teaching and Learning). The counsellor uses this programme to introduce himself to the teachers and what he stands to do in the school. The counsellor invites some resource persons who will talk to teachers about some students' need areas that affect teaching and learning, like harmony in the place of work, cordial relationship between teachers

and students, handling students without stress, different methods of teaching, learner's differences, and so on.

Conclusion

Teacher education is the backbone of successful education programmes. The age-long structure of teacher education and teacher preparation in Nigeria is currently counterproductive. The need for re-construction of teacher education requires the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders including school administrators.

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