

## Teacher Education in Nigeria: An Overview

Mukhtari Ado Jibril (PhD)

### **Abstract**

*The paper stresses the importance of teacher education and briefly examined the development of teacher in Nigeria. The (NCE) National Certificate in Education is seen as an important and basic requirement for teachers to practice. The objectives of teacher education and the role of Commission for Colleges of Education as well as the Curriculum of the NCE were examined by the paper.*

### **Introduction**

One of the basic truths in education is that the quality of education depends largely upon the quality of the teacher. Whether the teacher is seated at one end of the proverbial log with the student perched at the other end; or whether the teacher is in the best equipped classroom of the most up-to-date school, with the best state of the art; whether the teacher is at work with a small number of students or is on a television screen that is viewed by a large number of students; whether the teacher is what is seen in computer programmes or programmed text books, there is the likelihood that the students will not get quality education unless the teacher is qualitative. Therefore, whatever input is made into an educational system in respect of management, resources, facilities and array of instructional materials, will be of little avail if the teacher is unskilled, poorly trained, or even ignorant. This view is shared by several writers, e.g., Stinnett, (1962) and Nelson, Polansky & Carlson, (2000)

The many specialities in teaching today, with their wide range of required skills and knowledge meant that teachers need to be well prepared to a degree for the vastly different

nature of teaching functions, challenges and tasks therein. This point to the fact that for effectiveness, teachers need to be given a professional education that will qualify them thus, as well as enable them to effectively perform the task of giving the appropriate support towards enhancing a virile and qualitative system of education in any nation. Teacher education is the foundation of quality in the educational system and this is the key to unlock all facets of development. This is very relevant in nations that look up to education as a vehicle for attaining the desired development in all sectors of national life.

The concern of teacher education world over is the training and preparing would be teachers for effective functioning at the school. Teacher education has therefore been defined severally. Okafor (1988) has defined teacher education to mean the form of education which is planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach particularly but not exclusively, in primary and post primary levels of schooling.

Teacher education is the professional training that teachers receive for them to be classified as professionals. Being the training arm of the teaching profession, teacher education according to Ipaye (1996) is charged with the task of developing knowledge and skills as basis for practice, with preparing personnel entry into the teaching profession(pre-service) and with contributing to the on going development of practicing professionals(in- service).

Teacher education is therefore to function by equipping teachers with the wherewithal; both ethical, intellectual competencies and skills, dispositions, emotional and so forth, that will enable them develop and imbue in their students the requisite educational and societal dispositions. The quality of any educational system therefore solely depends on the quality of the teachers one finds in the school system. This paper is

therefore going to give an overview of teacher education in the Nigerian context.

### **History of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The coming of the missionaries according to Fafunwa (1974), into Nigeria in the 1840s marked the beginnings of the development of modern western education. Right from its inception, missionary education which much later metamorphosed into western education, the need for teachers became obvious. The quality and quantity of teachers being churned out from the mission houses through the tutelage of pastors and reverends in charge of the various church denominations was simply not enough.

According to Taiwo (1980), the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established the first Teacher training Institution in Abeokuta, western Nigeria, in 1859. The Baptist Mission also founded the Baptist Training College Ogbomosho in 1897, with the Wesleyan Mission establishing the Wesley College in Ibadan in 1918. In the Eastern part of Nigeria, the Hope Waddell Institute was founded in Calabar in 1892. Later in 1909, the then Colonial Government established the Nassarawa Schools in Northern Nigeria. Katsina and Toro Colleges were later established in 1927 and 1929 respectively. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) also set up Teacher Training Institutions. The Grade III Teachers certificate was the qualification most of these Institutions award. Later on Teachers Colleges awarding the Grade II sprang up. The Grade I Teacher Training was later introduced and aspired by ambitious teachers willing to enhance their status to qualify for teaching in Secondary Schools.

The earliest curriculum for the early teacher training consisted of subjects like; English, Arithmetic, Writing, Geography, Hygiene, General Studies, Geometry, Agriculture, Nature Study, Local Languages. The Ashby commission report

however observed a lot of anomalies in the then colonial education in Nigeria, including Teacher Training that was seen to be highly inadequate. Many teachers were un-certificated and improperly trained (Ashby, 1960). This resulted in the recommendation for massive expansion of intermediate education for teachers aimed at upgrading the existing teaching force. This brought about the existence and emergence of Advanced Teachers Colleges, and which later metamorphosed into Colleges of Education.

The first of these Advanced Teachers Colleges designed and established by the Federal Government with the assistance of UNESCO, were meant to produce well-qualified non graduate teachers for secondary schools to replace the older well established Grade II Teachers who were not qualified to perform the task (UNESCO, 1996). The scheme provided teachers with the NCE (Nigeria Certificate in Education), that are of good quality and the right quantity to meet the educational needs as at that time. The number of these colleges gradually increased to cater for expansions in demands for education and qualified teachers. As at 2003, there were 68 Colleges of Education owned by the Federal and State Governments, Privately owned and also by the Military. There is one such College designated for women only and one for Special Education as well as colleges of Education Technical. These Colleges award the NCE certificate with some of them upgraded to award B. Ed degrees of affiliate Universities. The duration of the NCE is usually three years for the full time students, while the part time students spend upwards to five years to complete their programme of studies.

Universities established prior to independence, at independence and post independence, also provided teacher education programmes. Established Faculties of Education and Institutes of Education in these Universities, Federal, State, Private and Military, provided professional training for teachers.

With many of the universities running programmes in BA, BSc Education, M.Ed., and up to Doctoral Degree level. The total number of Universities in the country is 52 as at 2003. And 31 of these have Faculties and Institutes of Education. Similarly, Polytechnics provide teacher education programmes in the areas of Technical and Vocational Education at both the NCE and Degree categories. The National Teachers Institute also provides professional training leading to the NCE by Distant Learning. Other institutions mandated to provide teacher education included the National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) and National mathematics Centre (NMC) However; the Colleges of education are the sole providers of the bulk of professionally trained teachers in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2005). The number of both Universities and colleges of Education offering teacher education courses has however increased during the last few years.

### **Objectives of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The Nigerian National Policy on education is the document that states the philosophy of Nigerian education. The same document also stated the goals of other components of the Nigerian educational system including teacher education. The policy (FGN, 2004) gave the following as the goals of teacher education as follows;

- (a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- (b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- (c) Help teachers fit into social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;

- (d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- (e) Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The policy went further to state that, all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained. Teacher education shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. Since no education system may raise above the quality its teachers, the policy pegged the minimum qualification for entry into teaching profession to be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

### **The National Commission for Colleges of Education and Teacher Education in Nigeria**

To effectively monitor, supervise and enhance the quality of a uniformly standardised teacher education programme at the NCE level in Colleges of Education in Nigeria, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established in 1989.

The NCCE was given the mandate of ensuring adequate supervision of all aspects of non-degree teacher education and teacher professionalization (Isyaku, 2000). The Commission was also mandated to, among other things;

- (a) Make recommendation on the national policy necessary for the full development of teacher education and the training of teachers;
- (b) Determine the qualified teacher needs of the country for the purpose of planning training facilities and in particular, prepare periodic master plans for the balanced co-coordinated development of Colleges of Education;
- (c) Enquire into and advise the Federal Government on the financial needs of the colleges and receive block grants

- from the Government and allocate to the Colleges based on approved formula;
- (d) Lay down minimum standards for all programmes of teacher education and accredit their certificates and their academic awards;
  - (e) Undertake periodic review of terms and conditions of service of personnel in the Colleges of Education and make recommendations thereon to the Government;
  - (f) Collate, analyse and put together information relating to teacher education in the country; and
  - (g) Make recommendations on the development of Pre-Vocational, Technical, Agricultural, Business and Home Economics Education in all our Primary and Junior Secondary Schools and advise Government as to the necessary facilities for them, the course requirements, the relative contribution of government and industry and how to ensure that women take full part in the programmes (NCCE, 1996).

### **The Curriculum for Teacher Education**

The Nigeria national policy on education did not only state the objectives of teacher education, but the NPE (FGN, 1998) further elaborated on the curricular and Minimum Standards for the NCE as designed and developed by the NCCE. The NCE is the minimum qualification that is required by the practicing teacher, is also the most widely sought for qualification by teachers in Nigeria. And all the Colleges of Education in the country offer a uniform curriculum for the trainee teachers. This therefore ensures uniformity in both standard and quality. The periodic curriculum conferences and reviews organised to assess all the courses taught in these Colleges, as well as the accreditation exercises by the NCCE for all the colleges goes

an extra mile to give a definite quality and standard to the programme of teacher education in the country.

Deriving a uniform standard for professional training for teachers as pointed out by several authors, e. g. Stinnett, (1962); Lassa, (1996); Nelson, Polanski, & Carlson, (2000); Obanya, (2004), is important. Echoing this, Lassa (1996) submitted that, the standard for teacher preparation should encompass the following four fundamental areas:

- (a) General Studies
- (b) Professional studies, mainly elements of philosophy, sociology, as applied to education, comparative education, school administration and methods of teaching various subjects or educational technology.
- (c) Studies related to the students intended field of teaching.
- (d) Teaching practice.

The duration of the National Certificate in Education (NCE) is three years for the full time students and five years for the part time students. There are however arguments suggestions on the imperative need to make the programme of four year duration for the full time students. Basically, a student is expected to take a number of courses that constitute the following number of credit hours in the following category of subject areas;

(a) General Education 36 units: - These include courses in the broad areas of Educational psychology, Foundations of Education, Curriculum Studies, and Special Education.

(b) First or Major Teaching Subject 36 units: - Here students are to take courses in the areas or subject disciplines that they are interested in and competent to study as their first teaching or main teaching subject. These subjects can range from the arts and humanities, sciences (applied and pure), social sciences and the vocational studies.



- (c) Secondary or Minor Teaching subject 36 units: - Students select a minor or subsidiary teaching subject to be studied with the main or first or major subject. There are accepted and approved subject combinations from which students make their selections.
- (d) General Studies 14 units: - The students are given a selection of courses to improve their overall general knowledge in language and communication, ICT, science and society etc.
- (e) Teaching Practice 6 units: - This is the practical and professional component of the entire programme. Students are expected to be on a practical teaching that will expose them to the practice of all the theories and principles they have learnt in class. The students are to stay away for a period of twelve weeks for the teaching practice during which they will be supervised regularly. The number of visits to the students is expected to be six.
- (f) Project 6 units: - the students are expected to complete an individual or group research project in a problem area of their choice and interest in either education or their teaching subject. Already the students had been exposed to a theoretical class of research methodology.

At the time of graduation, a student is expected to have taken 130 units or credits to obtain the National Certificate in Education.

### **Conclusion**

The teacher is important in the scheme of developing the educational potential of any nation. Therefore, educating the teacher for effective performance of his responsibility of educating the larger members of the society cannot be overemphasised in nation. That is perhaps one of the reasons

why the issue of providing the best crop of teachers in Nigeria is taken very seriously. This is indicated in the efforts made at regular intervals to update and improve the programmes for teacher education through curriculum reviews that involves all the practitioners in the industry. But also, the quality control mechanisms put in place by the supervisory body, the National Commission for Colleges of Education in ensuring that all Colleges in the country are able to provide not only the minimum standard in terms of course content, but also in terms of admission of students, quality of academic staff, facilities, and certification of students. The regular accreditation of all the Colleges provide an opportunity for bench-marking, reformation, innovation, changes and improvement as well as a quality control assurance for teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

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