

The Challenges of Teaching Profession in the Recovery of Quality in the Nigerian Education System

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Abstract

The teacher factor has always been a subject of discussion in the education industry. This is because, the teacher remains the arrow head of the entire education system and practice. What he does and what he does not, both entails a far reaching implication on the quality of education delivered to the clients of the nations' education system from across the pupils/students, the parents, community and the society at large. This explains why there are too much hues and cries in the depreciating quality in the Nigerian education system. It is indisputable in Nigeria that the quality of the products of the Nigerian education system across all levels has been a matter of serious concern to all stakeholders-parents, students, teachers, administrators, employers of labour and community leaders among others. Meanwhile, upon all the underlying issues related to the causes of poor quality education, the teacher factor is considered by this paper as very paramount and supposed to be the starting point in the recovery of quality in the education sector. The paper thus, examined the teaching profession with special reference to the concepts of the teacher, his training of education and his performance and add up to the challenges the profession is facing in the recovery of quality in the Nigerian education system. The paper therefore recommended a full review of all the policies and facets of the teacher, his training and his practice to enhance the realization of quality education in the Nigerian education sector.

Keywords: Teacher, Teacher Education, Teaching Profession, Quality education

Introduction

It is a common knowledge that the Nigerian education system has been adjudged by parents, students, scholars and even governments over the years as being in a permanent crisis since independence. The crisis has been that none of the aspect of the education system is unaffected. These includes, the school system, teachers, infrastructure, facilities, management, ethics or morals, learnings, knowledge creation. Consequently, the quality of the output is degenerating by the day and has become a serious matter of concern to every education stakeholder. The teacher factor in whatever case remains critical in the growth and development of any education system especially as it affects the provision of quality education in the schools. In developed societies teachers are given their proper place of being the custodians of values, ideologies, culture and traditions of the people and are expected to transmit same to the young generation. The transmission must not only be a mere one but also a qualitative one. In Nigeria like many other developing nations, teacher related issues are the dominant factors affecting the delivery of quality education for the rapid advancement of the nation and nation's building. It is for this reason that this paper examines the entire facets of the teaching profession right

from the teacher, his training or education and his performance and its related issues in the recovery of quality in the Nigeria's educational system.

The Concept of the Teacher

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) (2002) defines a teacher as a person who had undergone approved professional training in education at appropriate levels and capable of transmitting knowledge, attitudes and skills to the learner. This definition put teachers as special person trained to handle the human psyche, and developed it to the fullest of its potentials. It is also referred to a person who have acquired knowledge, skills, training in both character and learning, with adequate pedagogical expertise to influence the entry behavior of learners. In any educational system teachers are masters of the art and business of knowledge transmission, implementation of all formal and informal instructions and total upbringing of persons from the unknown to known. The education system at whatever level depends on the teacher to interpret concepts, knowledge, attitude and skills to the learners to make meaning in the process of education. They are persons who work hand in hand with the parents, community members and institutions to transmit skills and

attitudes to children in order to solve the problems of society. In summary, scholars have described the teacher as key man, a pivot of the entire educational programmes and process (Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), 1980; Ukeje, 1991; Lassa, 1993)

The Concept of Teacher Education

Precisely, teacher education is the process by which teachers are produced for the various levels of the country's educational system—pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. The National Teachers Institute (NTI) (2000) considers teacher education as a process of education and training of a person in specialized areas of knowledge known as education particularly, philosophy, sociology, history and psychology of education plus some administrative techniques as well as in subject contents and in the actual practice of the work of the teacher. This implies that teacher education is a process that involves institutions and stages where the actual practice is taught, learnt and certificated. It describes a system on how teachers are produced by way of giving them a specialized training in knowledge and pedagogical skills to be able to interact with students and effect a change in their behavior. Teachers are therefore categorized based on the process and level of education they pass through and the quality of knowledge and skills they acquired plus the level at which they are prepared to teach or transmit ideas and knowledge.

The process of teacher education in Nigeria started as far back as 1859, when the Church Missionary Society (CMS) established a teacher training college in Abeokuta, Ogun state (Yabo, 2017). From that time to date, teacher education has witnessed a major revolution in the country's educational system. Today, in Nigeria, there are many teacher training institutions such as Teacher Training Colleges (although phased out), Institutes, Colleges of Education, Universities of Education, Faculties and Institutes of Education in Universities as well as several outlets for the training and upgrading of teachers through different modes such as Distance Learning, refresher and intermediate courses e.g workshops, seminars, inductions as well as through professional qualifications and certificates being awarded by Nigerian Universities and Colleges (Yabo, 2017). This aspect of education in consideration of its importance, the National Policy on Education (2013) also conceptualize teacher education by giving it a special place and purpose in the policy as stated inter-alia;

- a) in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development
- b) the Minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE)

Furthermore, in pursuance of this laudable position of teacher education, the policy stated clearly the goals of teacher education in Nigeria as follows;

- a) produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
- b) further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c) help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals
- d) provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- e) enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.

This paper while x-raying further the provisions of teacher education in the NPE, the following clauses are found very relevant to this discussion. In the policy, the government stated that it will;

- 1) make all teachers in educational institutions professionally trained and Information Technology (IT) shall be incorporated into all teacher training programmes
- 2) at the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and Degree levels, education programmes shall be expanded to cater for the requirements of technical, vocational, business and special education;
- 3) teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum and teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in the profession whereby
 - i) all newly recruited teachers shall undergo a formal process of induction;
 - ii) in-service training shall be an integral part of continuing teacher education. It is mandatory that all school proprietors

- provide in-service education for their teachers.
- 4) a. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) shall continue to register teachers and regulate teaching profession and practice.
 - b. only professionally qualified and registered teachers shall be allowed to practice at all levels
 - c. newly qualified teachers shall serve a period of one-year internship.

In addition to these, the policy has also provided for many initiatives aimed at the improvement of quality education in the country. A cursory look at these provisions as contained in the policy will reveal that, adequate preparations are made for the development of the Nigerian education sector through the use of teacher education processes especially as it affects quality training and quality delivery in the Nigeria's educational system. In fact, to sum it up Malison (1975) postulated that the quality and caliber of teachers in a country could serve as a valid index in measuring the quality of education delivery in a country and its subsequent development.

The Concept of Teaching

Teaching is an activity in which human beings are initiated into the process of socialization, life and living. Its activities involve giving knowledge, skills, training or lessons in a specified area or subject to the learner with a view to influence behavior. Teaching is not mere telling or passing information, rather it involves and must lead to internalization of ideas and a change in behavior on the part of the learner. Essentially, teaching is therefore not an end in itself by the teacher getting his/her salary monthly only, but a means to an end where learners are led to discover themselves and practice what they learnt for their individual benefit and that of the society.

Teaching Profession and the Recovery of Quality Education

Having seen who is a teacher, what produces the teacher-teacher education and what the teacher does as a professional, it is clear that, the three concepts are well connected in the process of having the engine room of the process of educational transformation. The fact is that you cannot have good teachers until you have a good process of producing them and having the good process of

producing them is what will guarantee good teaching in the classroom. It is also only when the trio are well connected that the end users' (students/learners) life and living will be developed and which will lead to the promotion of the development of the society. There is no doubt that, for the recovery of quality education in the country's education system the fundamental issues in the teaching profession needs to be examined and addressed. It is a common knowledge that the quality of delivery of education right from the basic level to tertiary levels is backsliding. What students at the basic education level are supposed to learn is what they learn at the secondary school level and what they should learn at the secondary level is what they learn at the tertiary level. It is no longer news that many incidences of graduating students from the nation's tertiary institutions cannot withstand or defend their certificates. Some of them are found to have started facing challenges right from their places of primary assignments after posting from their orientation camps. This is a matter of serious concern and must only be addressed using the teaching profession development and repositioning. Presently, authorities are in the habit of employing unqualified and untrained teachers into the teaching job which is very unhealthy in the attainment of quality education. The ethics of the profession provides that only persons who have attained a specialized training in pedagogy are employed as teachers at whatever level of education and until this is abided by the provision of quality in the Nigeria's educational system will remain in jeopardy.

Similarly, the teaching profession provides the requirement for refresher trainings in form of seminars, workshops for updating and upgrading of teachers' knowledge thereby building their capacity to deliver a thorough, intelligent and qualitative ideas to their students. The aim of this is to keep teachers abreast of the new vistas and horizons of knowledge, skills and training in their respective fields of specializations. Apparently, with this new knowledge, they will be able to impart adequately the required quality skills, attitudes and knowledge to their learners and students. Another very important issue regarding the teaching profession is the actual practice of teaching itself. It is always one thing to have knowledge but another one to possess the skills to impart the knowledge. Thus, the issue of adequate pedagogical skills for a teacher to perform his/her job are very paramount. Today's teachers are really in need of requisite skills to perform their duties diligently and provide quality in their classroom delivery. It is therefore the task of the teaching profession to ensure the

proper acquisition of necessary skills to impart knowledge to students easily and adequately for the understanding of all students.

It is noteworthy that for the teaching profession to strive in the recovery of quality in the Nigerian education sector, the issue of ethics in the practice of teaching is very indispensable. Teachers must be trustworthy in their practice of their job. honesty dedication and hard work must be their watchword. With this it is understandable why it is not every dick and harry should be allowed to be in the classroom as a teacher. It must be borne in mind that the task of recovery of quality in education is very onerous and undisciplined teachers can not in any way guarantee the transmission of sound characters in the students. Thus, the teaching profession must garner all necessary mechanism both in training and practice that will ensure the production of qualified, disciplined and teachers of impeccable behaviors in the Nigerian education system.

The Challenges of Teaching Profession in the Recovery of Quality in Education

The challenges of professional teachers in the recovery of quality in the education system are very diverse and multidimensional. However, this paper viewed this situation in the following areas.

- a) *Inadequacy of Teachers:* It is a common knowledge that there are many schools with a good number of pupils' enrolment but with only one teacher who worked as the headmaster, class master, head student as well as all subjects' teacher at the same time. There are also numerous instances where there are schools without teachers specially in the remote areas. Pupils will come to the established school and wait since morning but their teacher will not come to the school until it is getting noon when most pupils have left back home after being tired of staying waiting for their teacher to come. Some parents especially in agrarian society and communities will prevent their children from attending such schools for fear of double tragedy i.e losing their education and their labor at the home/farm at the same time. Instead, they carry along with them to their farms which is now largely accounting for the incidence of out of school children in the country. Studies

have shown that, the implementation of the programme is being faced with the major problems of teachers in both quantity and quality as well as infrastructural decay (Yabo, 2016; Yabo, 2019; Yabo, 2021).

- b) *Preponderance of Untrained Teachers:* As it were today, with all the efforts being put in place by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) in ensuring only well trained and professionally qualified teachers are teaching in the nations' schools, there are still incidences where states and Local Governments employ untrained and unqualified and unprofessional teachers especially at the basic education level. This is lamentable as doing that is drawing back all efforts at quality education delivery in the Nigerian education system. It needs to be noted that time has passed when such teachers are employed to teach especially now that the country has hundreds of teacher education institutions such as public and private Colleges of Education, faculties of education in almost all public and private universities as well as institutes of education and teacher education open and distance learning programmes across the country.
- c) *Dearth of Infrastructural facilities in Schools:* This is an issue that is not hidden to everyone as all travelers by road across the country can attest to this fact. It is not uncommon to see primary schools especially without roofs, with dilapidated buildings and sometimes collapsed building, blown off roofs by rainstorm and broken doors and windows among others. Apparently, where children in such schools attend them are virtually exposed to cold, rain and harsh weather conditions. With the growing insecurity, inadequacy of these structures especially school fence put students at risk of being kidnapped at any time. As it were today, absence of these infrastructure and security facilities is greatly challenging the enrolment of students across all levels of the Nigerian education system. Kidnappers have so far entered into all categories of schools-Islamiyya schools in Mosques, schools in Churches, primary, secondary and tertiary, private and public education schools. Some parents have already concluded that something meaningful about security and infrastructure must be done in schools before their confidence can be

restored or they can enroll their children into schools. When the school environment is not conducive, there is no way teachers can ensure quality education to pupils who are not usually found in schools with such undesirable characteristics.

d) *Inadequate Teaching and Learning materials:*

This is also an issue that is closely link to ensuring quality education in schools. Previously, government provides most of the teaching and learning materials to the satisfaction of both students and teachers. But presently, not much of that can be said because even where some of these materials are provided by any tier of government, the supply may be in short supply and due to inefficiency of some school administrators, some of these materials may be left undistributed thereby paving way for its destruction by ant and termites out of poor storage or in some circumstances may be sold out. There is no doubt that adequacy of teaching and learning materials stands as a strong prerequisite for quality education delivery. It increases teacher reinforcement and motivation to perform well and also raise the students' morale to pay attention and dedication to learn and understand effectively.

e) *Political victimization of Teachers:* Teachers today also suffer political victimization and which ends up in killing their morale to do their job effectively, some are put out of job forcefully, some unjustifiably transferred to distant places for political reasons, some with non-teaching qualification employed for political settlement, some with teaching qualification under paid also for political reasons, some with their promotion letters and the financial benefit not effected etc. With this situation, it is extremely difficult for any learning to take place in schools and whatever quality education is needed will not be guaranteed. That is why in some schools there are even no pupils because parents are disenchanted with the system. As it is today also, pupils' complete primary schools and can neither read nor write texts correctly. This is in addition to the loss of their labour at home and thus, double jeopardy. Presently, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have entered their sixth months' strike action which commenced in February 2022 and which is an example of

political interference and victimization of teachers. And to say the least, there are no education level teachers that have never gone into any strike action in the Nigerian education system from independence to date. As at the time of writing this paper all Federal and states Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) and Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) are on industrial strike action. It is rather annoying to know that the political leaders are still adamant to the plight of the University lecturers. This is an unhealthy development in the teaching profession in Nigerian education and will grossly affect the attainment of quality education in the country.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

It needs to be made crystal clear that all development of nations depends on the quality of education being imparted in schools. The teaching profession housed the professionals whose positive actions are the drivers of societal development. In Nigeria and elsewhere, it is clearly stated that no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers and thus, Nigeria should do everything possible to ensure that the prerequisites of the teaching profession are put in place and institutionalized for the recovery of quality in the Nigeria's education system. For instance, studies have shown that some 30% of students' achievement variance is accounted for by teachers and in this context, therefore, other items contracted in tangible forms at the expense of teacher education and welfare should be examined critically to ensure that they don't take precedence before consideration of the teacher factor. It should be borne in mind that if the nation is to catch up with its development peers like Brazil and Malaysia and avoid being overtaken by junior African nations like Ghana, Kenya, and Zimbabwe, it must adopt reforms in the entire system that will support the entry of the most intelligent and capable individuals into the teaching profession. Priority must be given to this crop of intelligent and professionally committed teachers who will lead the nation into the modern era of scientific and technological development. Finally, and especially with regards to two basic elements of the teaching profession-teacher and teacher education, the following modest and key recommendations for the way forward are hereby presented by this paper.

- 1) Government at all levels should accord the teaching profession and teachers their rightful place in the scheme of government service. A situation whereby teachers are lastly paid or not paid their salaries among their counterpart civil servants, dismissed or illegally transferred for political reason, ejected in government quarters for embarking on lawful strike actions, demean in the society and also being disrespected in the society among others should be avoided. In line with this, teachers especially the NCE graduates should be considered for automatic employment after graduation at the basic education level This will attract candidates into the teaching profession and give them a sense of belonging, pride and self-esteem in the scheme of public service and in return will make them more committed, dedicated and enthusiastic about their job and which will guarantee quality education in the Nigeria's education system.
- 2) The federal government should immediately implement its pronounced policy of supporting all teacher education students across all tertiary institutions in the country. It will be recalled that during the 2021 celebration of the World Teachers Day, President Buhari has announced a package for all students studying education courses at the various faculties of education in Universities and colleges of education. In the package, the federal government approved payment of the sum of N75,000:00 per semester as stipends for all B.A.(Ed), B.Sc.(Ed) and B.(Ed) in public Universities and payment of the sum of N50,000:00 per semester for students of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) at the public Colleges of Educations in the country (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). There is no doubt that if this is actualized, the best brains will be attracted into the teaching profession and will encourage the best graduates to take up career in teaching. It will further enhance the status and capacity of the teacher education faculties, colleges and departments to improve their services in all aspects of teacher production processes. By extension this will lead to having well trained teachers who in turn will deliver quality education in the Nigerian system.
- 3) On the teaching itself, as promised by the President Buhari in 2021, the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), should as soon as possible commence the review of the National Teacher education policy and other policies on teaching careers and also the National Commissions for Colleges of Education (NCCE) to review the Ministerial Strategic Plan, and the previous policies on teacher retention. This will go a long way in ensuring that the best brains are also retained on the job. Issues affecting their promotions, payment arrears, pensions and gratuities should be taken seriously and be properly addressed. So also all learning materials required for the teachers' job in the classroom should be adequately provided along-side providing conducive environment in terms of infrastructure should be adequately provided.
- 4) Governments at all levels should ensure the provision of adequate infrastructural facilities and instructional materials into schools especially at the basic education level where laying the foundation for quality education is very critical. This will facilitate the practice of teaching by teachers in schools with ease and with the required materials that will make learning practical and meaningful.
- 5) Government should as a matter of urgency henceforth, stop the employment of all untrained and unqualified teachers into the teaching profession. The benchmark stated by the TRCN for registration of only professional teachers should be strictly adhered and especially, to start prosecuting all those unqualified found teaching in the country's education system.
- 6) There should also be an immediate prevention of political victimization of teachers at all levels in the country. The current practice whereby state actors withholds, refuse to pay or employ teachers or be transferred to remote areas or illegally dismissed from service for political reasons is unhealthy and is making the profession to lose many of its qualified and dedicated members during their active service

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