

THE TEACHER EDUCATION AS A CRITICAL TOOL FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract: *The paper examined, who is a teacher and what he / she does. It also sees teaching as more than any other profession because it touches life of practically every citizen either as students, parents, guardians or administrators and planners. To treat teachers and teaching profession with levity is a danger to national unity. A Poorly prepared or educated and unsure teacher will likely produce poor doctors, engineers, fellow teachers and the like. The service of teachers are indispensable to the national unity, for they are more than any others professional group that influence the lives of the Nigerian youth and therefore the nation's future leaders. It further submitted that it is the responsibility of all Nigerians irrespective of belief, values, cultural background and other differences to work together to ensure that good teachers are made available for the unity of this great nation called Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Every concerned citizen of this country knows very well that there are numerous signs and signals that show that Nigeria is threatened and it is shaky state. These signs and signals are all embodied in the increasing incidence of armed robbery, blood clashes between and within political parties, religious like what Boko Haram are doing and what is happening in the Niger Delta area. There are also increasing signs in every state in the country wide spread declined in morality and disrespect for law and order. According to Samuel in Korode (2012) respect for the rule of law and honesty have been discarded while nepotism, corruption, bribery, embezzlement of public funds, laziness, greed and social vices have been elevated to the

status of acceptable social value. If the country is to achieve unity, peace and progress, every one of us should learn to cultivate degree of tolerance not only of our ethnic or political differences but also of religious differences so that we act as a nation. The Nigerian can utilize the power of education through proper teacher education to tackle her numerous above mentioned problems. Teacher is important inputs into the educational system because they are key factors in formal education. Okafor in Mating-Umeh (2010) stated that the greatest asset of any country, is its human resources and the human resources of a country are basically the youths who are the future leaders. These youths said Fafunwa (2007) are no other, than the educated males and females. How these youths take-education to be important is of great concern to any national development. The education of these youths is done by teachers, because on the opinion of Sunday (2009) teachers are served as a communicator of ideas, knowledge, skills, attitudes, beliefs and concepts with the sole responsibility of effecting positive changes in the learners behavior as an outcome of education. Apart from students, opined Fadipe (2003) teachers are the largest and most crucial factors of educational system who influence to a greater extent the quality of educational output. This is in line with national policy on education (2013) which stated that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Adeyemi (2011) argued that the level of achievement in any schools is intimately related to the quality of its teachers while the quality of any school system is a function of the aggregated quality of teachers who operate it. The paper therefore focuses on the role of teachers 'education as tool for national unity in Nigeria.

The teaching profession in Nigeria today is a threatened species, we are moving gradually to a stage where teachers in the primary schools, in the secondary schools and particularly at the tertiary level may not have anybody to succeed them after their retirement. Yet no nation can develop, no nation can exist meaningfully without teachers. The teacher is an indispensable

segment of national unity and development (Fadipe, 2003) Teaching more than any other profession, touches the life of practically every citizen, either as students, parents, guardians, or administrators and planners. To treat the teaching profession with levity and abandon is to damn our own future. A poorly educated and unsure teacher will likely produce a poor doctor, architect, fellow teacher, and the like. The service of the teachers are indispensable to the nation for they are more than any other professional group, influence the lives of the Nigerian youth and therefore the nation's unity and development. Education is an instrument of social mobility, a potent factor in national development and national unity; yet without competent teachers, nothing can be achieved even in the face of the most evolutionary and well intentioned of any educational policies and programs. To be competent is to be well qualified, to have one's duties as a teacher, to be fit, to be in a classroom to teach, to be capable of being a teacher both in academic and professional (Fafunwa 2007). Teacher is person who transmitting knowledge, skills, attitudes and values in accordance with certain professional principles. Thus, those who do not perform the teaching act in accordance with acceptable professional principles are not teachers. Otherwise they may be technicians, cheaters or quacks. Therefore in this paper we regard as teachers only those who are professionally prepared and who practice the teaching act in accordance with acceptable professional principles.

Here it may be necessary to clear some other misconceptions; since teaching is a profession, teachers are educated and prepared not trained. It is accepted that there is an element of training in teacher education but basically professional teachers are educated and prepared. To make the point clearer, technicians and craftsmen are trained but professionals are educated and prepared. Another misconception is in regard to the terms "educator" and "educationist" an educator is whoever educates or instruct or teach, but educationist is a professionally qualified educator or teacher,

prepared in accordance with professional principles or in the principles and practices of education. Thus, a University Professor, say of mathematics, without professional education qualification is simply an educator not an educationist. This clarification is very necessary because Nigerians generally regard any University Professor, particularly if he/she happens to have been a Vice-Chancellor, as an educationist. (Bunza and Ukeje in Godwin 2010). Teaching is a profession, so professional labels should be reserved for Professional teachers. The national commission for Colleges of Education (2012), advocate the production of well-motivated teachers with high personal and professional discipline, integrity and competence for all the levels of the educational system. Specifically for the:

- Preparation of teachers with appreciable expertise in curriculum planning, development and delivery, as well as competence research, guidance and counseling.
- Production of professionals who can combine the use of conventional teachings strategies and worlds unfolding information communication technology (ICT) in the generation and imparting of knowledge, attitude and skills.
- Continues preparation and upgrading of teachers who can stand out for their professional competence, sense of social responsibility and commitment to function effectively as constructive socio-economic, moral and spiritual choice.

Teacher Education can be defined as the form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and supplied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach, particularly, but not exclusively in primary and post-primary levels of schooling (Sunday; 2009). In its extended dimension, it encompasses also the preparation of administrators, supervisors and guidance and counselors; within same frame of reference. As the training arm of the teaching profession, teacher education is charged with developing knowledge and skills as basis for practice, with preparing

personnel for entry into the profession (Pre-service) and with contributing to the on-going development of practicing professional.

BRIEF HISTORY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

According Nwana, Ukeje and Bunza in Kolawole (2008) Teachers Education started in this country as far back as 1859 when the Church Missionary Society founded a Training Institution in Abeokuta. The college was moved to Lagos in 1867 when the Missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta. In 1896, it was moved to Oyo, and became St. Andrews College, Oyo. It was a residential institution for male students and it was free education; accommodation, feeding, clothing, laundry, and books and so on. In 1897, the Baptist Mission founded a Baptist training college at Ogbomoso while the Wesleyan Missionary founded Wesley College Ibadan and Hope Waddel institute was founded in 1892. It served a dual purpose of training young primary school leavers in the various trades and also trained teachers and preachers. The government in 1909 founded Nassarawa School for the training of teachers. The early teachers were classified into three categories namely: Elementary, higher Elementary and Senior teachers. The senior teachers were supposed to pass two subjects at the general certificate of education advanced level and also undergo a stiff teaching practice examination. The curriculum of early teachers colleges includes; English, geography, History, geometry, arithmetic, hygiene, carpentry, drawing, general science, nature study, agriculture, music, Christian doctrine, Yoruba and needle-work. It should be placed on record that prior to the emergence of teacher training institutions, most teachers received instruction from the home of reverend fathers and pastors in charge of various Christian denomination.

Admissions into early teachers colleges were through competitive examinations. Students from the early teacher colleges were holders of standard VI Certificates. However, they were expected to

have served as pupil teachers for two years and to have passed the pupil teacher examination, and to have served as assistant teachers before qualifying for the two years teacher:’ course best education. There were two types of teachers colleges the grade III teachers college and the grade II teachers college. The grade III teachers college lasts for two, years which leads to a grade III teacher’s certificate after a successful completion of the course. Teachers of this category teach at the lower level of primary school. Those who failed the final examination at the end of the programme were still employed as teachers. They were classified as trained but referred at the next available opportunity. Teachers who failed the grade III certificate examinations and thus are not certified as capable teachers were poorly paid. On the successful completion of the grade III course, a teacher had to teach for a minimum of two years before he/she could proceed to the higher elementary training college which offered the grade II course.

A successful completion of the course led to the award of teacher’s grade II certificate. In the 1950s and 1960s many primary schools were manned by holders of the teachers’ grade II certificate. As a matter of fact most schools in the rural areas were manned by grade III certificate holders. Only schools in the urban areas had holders of teacher grade II certificate as headmasters. Some of the primary schools in the urban area were manned by highly experienced teachers with standard VI certificate. This category of teachers were later awarded honorary grade II certificate by government. Modern III certificate holders were also employed as low cadre teachers in the primary schools. The employment of modern school graduate is renewable at the end of each academic year. These categories of teachers were subjected to annual proficiency examination which determines the renewal of teaching contract. A teacher who fails this examination which includes use of English, Mathematics, and general paper is laid off. He/she has to re-apply for reconsideration.

Furthermore, Success in proficiency examination enables one to be eligible to take the entrance examination to teacher training institutions. Holders of teachers' grade II certificates were employed to teach in the secondary modern schools. Also, grade II teachers were also employed to teach at the grade II teachers colleges. A few teachers at this level were holders of the grade I certificate. In the grade II College, the teachers were graduates. However some of the graduates who were supposed to prepare teachers were themselves not trained teachers. A few of the teachers were holders of the teacher's grade I certificate. At the secondary schools, a few of the teachers were graduates, many other categories of teachers existed. There were some with city and guild (C&G) and some holder of grade I certificates of education and advanced level. A few grade I certificate holders were also employed to teach some subjects like religious studies, arts and music. It should also be noted that most of the grade II teachers in the secondary schools were not teachers per say. In 1961, a one year associate ship for selected grade II teachers' was started at the University of Ibadan to enable the beneficiaries to take over the leadership of primary schools. IT was also the one of post graduate diploma in education to enable graduate without teaching qualification take up teaching appointments. Neither of the programmes attracted many candidates because of relatively poor conditions of service for teachers. In order to have enough qualified teachers from our secondary schools, the Ashby commission of 1959 recommended the creation of faculties of education in our universities. Nsukka University took the lead when she admitted students for B.A. and BSc. (Education). Other Universities later followed the initiates of Nsukka when they started offering degrees in education. University of the life (now- Obafemi Awolowo University) started in 1975.

THE NEED FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

The need for teacher education cannot be over-emphasized hence the Federal and state governments have continued to give supports to the education of all categories of teachers. Most teachers were trained at

government expense and many received allowances while undergoing training. During this period under review, teacher education was the most heavily subsidized level of education in Nigeria. The teacher is a crucial component of any educational system because no organized education can take place without teachers. The quality of education depends on the quality of teachers and qualities of teachers depend on their preparation since teachers can teach only what they know. It is a known fact that there is no educational system that can rise above the quality of its teachers. In the 1970s government used several avenues to increase the supply of teachers. Several teacher colleges were founded all over the country. Students admitted into these colleges increased crash programmes were introduced into these colleges. Normally three years were spent by modern III certificate holders to complete the grade II programmes.

The holders of the West African School Certificate or the general certificate of education with passes in five subjects at credit levels were admitted into the crash programmes. They spend only one year to obtain the teacher grade II certificates. These teachers were trained mainly for the primary schools. To increase the production of secondary school teachers the government increased the number of advanced teachers colleges. All Nigerian Universities were to have faculties of education offering educational courses. In order for the federal government to ensure that the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme was successful, it took over the financial responsibility for all Grade II teachers' colleges in the Federation. All untrained and uncertified teachers below grade II were assisted to achieve grade II through in-service courses organized by State Ministries of Education and financed by the federal government. At the NCE and degree levels of teacher education, the federal government rendered assistance by awarding bursaries to teachers in training. Distance learning centers came into being and series of sandwich courses emerged in order to upgrade teachers who are expected to help launch Nigeria into the era of technology. Since it is a known fact that no nation can rise above its teachers, it became

compulsory that the education of the teachers be accorded priority. The 6.3.3.4 system of education that was adopted in 1981 brought to change into the curriculum of teacher education. The Nigerian certificate in education became the minimum qualification expected to be held by any teacher in the education system of the country. It is expected that the least qualified teacher in the primary will be in possession of the NCE. In order for the government to achieve this laudable goal, the teacher Grade II colleges were phased out in most states of the federation while colleges of education for training of NCE Teachers were established. These colleges of education also mounted programmes on sandwich courses mainly to upgrade the grade II teachers and thus ensure that Nigerian certificate in education holders are the least teachers in our primary schools. The sandwich programmes have related courses such as primary education studies (PES) such courses are meant to groom teachers and make them specialize in primary education.

The NCE programme lasts for three years for regulate students, four or five for part time. There are also technical colleges of education. These colleges train teachers who are expected to teach at the junior section of the secondary schools. After the NCE, a teacher can apply to the University to study for a degree in education. A full time student needs three years to complete the programmes while a part time student spends about five years to complete the same programmes. Also a graduate with no teacher education has the opportunity to study for a post graduate diploma in education either on full time to part time basis. Such opportunities abound in most Nigerian universities, furthermore; education courses in the universities have also become specialized. Some colleges of education offer degree programmes. In order for the teacher in training to have a master of the teaching techniques he/she undergoes a period of supervised practiced teaching. No student's teacher graduates from the college unless they pass the teaching practice. Teacher education has become broadened because a teacher can now specialized in the series of fields. They are teacher Education, Educational Foundations, Educational

Administration, Guidance and Counseling, Educational Psychology, Curriculum Studies, Physical and Health Education etc. Teaching as the most vital and strategic profession could be used for national development and unity.

TEACHING AS THE MOST VITAL STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL UNITY

In a developing nation like Nigeria, teaching is the most vital and strategic profession for national unity and development. This is so because without good teachers there will be no good engineers, medical doctors, teachers, and lawyers. Indeed without good teachers and good educational systems, we invariably have unimaginative and unpatriotic engineers with roads that wash away after the first rains, doctors that kill more than can cure, incongruous laws and purchased justice. Of course the cumulative effect would be non development rather than development, and at times national retrogression instead of progression development and unity (Adeyemi, 2011). Indeed the strategic importance of the teacher and teacher education can hardly be over emphasized. Compared with the other professions, the mistakes of the teacher, and therefore defective teacher education programmes, are more devastating not only to the individual but also to the entire nation than the mistakes of a member of any other profession. For instance, if a doctor makes a mistake a patient may die, if an engineer makes a mistake a bridge may collapse, if a lawyer makes mistake somebody may lose his/her liberty, but if teacher makes a mistake generation yet unborn may suffer (Aloy, 2001).

Historically nations of the world have employed the tremendous power of education to achieve their national hopes and aspirations and attain their desired goals. For instance in Japan during the Meiji Restoration (1868), education was employed as an instrument, per excellence for national policy and was therefore used to cultivate the cardinal virtues of the Shinto Philosophy of filial piety, benevolence, justice, propriety, intelligence and fidelity (Okwuede, 2010). There is clear evident today in the life and behavior of the

average Japanese (Mating –Umeh, 2010) the inculcation of these cardinal virtues is the function of the school and consequently the teacher. In Germany during the Second Reign (1871) the nation was faced with the problem of national unity, hence education was used by Bismarck as an instrument for the unification of the over's elements within the empire (Fadipe, 2003). Nigeria can equally utilize the tremendous power of education, through proper teacher education, to tackle her numerous problems like ethnicity, indiscipline, corruption and greed, and thereby achieve rapid national unity and development. Indeed in order to build a great, peaceful, just, united, strong and self reliant, democratic and prosperous Nigerian nation, the Nigerian teacher must be well educated, he/she must be devoted, inspiring and he/she must be great.

Alfred North Whitehead in Korode (2016) viewed that education is not just the acquisition of knowledge but the acquisition of the art of the utilization of knowledge, and that the only use of the knowledge of the past is to equip us for the future, and that education with inert ideas is not only useless but that it is, beyond all emphasis, harmful. Education is the greatest power yet devised by man either for his continued progress or eventual destruction. It is good teachers that will be able to exploit and harness this tremendous power of education of the positive role of national unity and development in Nigeria.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper started with the current happenings such as boko haram, Niger delta crisis, political crisis and so on facing the nation and the role teacher education should play in the unity of nation. Who is a teacher and the work of teacher education and its brief history have been highlighted. Equally, explained the role play by teacher in the unity of the country compared with other countries like Japan and Germany who effectively utilized teacher education in their national unity and development. Lastly some recommendations were made in utilizing teacher in achieving national unity in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government, parents, teachers, the mass media, community leaders as well as churches and mosques leaders and other institutions in our society have responsibilities to propagate national unity to young and adults in the society. National unity is necessary conditions for peace and national development of any nation.
- Teachers at all levels should emphasis in their various lessons the need for national unity as a key not only for peace and development but also for national survival. The teachers should make their students understand the need to differentiate between attempting to convince others of the tightness of one's values and forcing these values on others. Everyone is entitled to his/her own set of values so long as exercising those values does not infringe upon the rights of others.
- There is also need to give an opportunity to every individual to learn how the values and beliefs each has developed, will affect the way in which others evaluate his/her. This means Nigerian must make every effort to see the world from other people's perspective, not always on one own perspective.
- People should learn to open their feelings, strengths, limitations, problems, needs, values and behaviors that are different from others so that what have been right for them may not be right to others and compromise should be made for national unity.

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