

PEDAGOGICAL PARADIGMS IN DYNAMICS: ATTENDING TO TEACHER EDUCATION NEEDS IN NIGERIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

With developments in information and communication technology, teacher education cannot be said to be same as before. Unlike the teacher being the major repository of knowledge, he/she is now a facilitator of knowledge to which, unlike before, the students have access through information and communication technology. There is, therefore, the necessity for the teachers of the 21st Century to present themselves not only as knowledgeable but also as models that students can look up to in this digital era. To achieve this would warrant that the best entrants are ensured into the teaching profession and scholarships must be provided for education students of higher institutions. Moreover, teaching practice should be made a continuous six-month programme for pre-service teachers while adequate infrastructure should be provided for teacher-training institutions. This paper examines these issues in order to ensure that teacher education needs are met in Nigeria in this 21st Century.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Paradigm, Teacher Education, Teaching Practice, Dynamics.

Introduction

No doubt, the world is changing rapidly and this is inclusive of Nigeria. Change in itself can be in different directions, desirable or undesirable. Many years back, teachers in Nigeria were models to students and they were leaders in the community. They were consulted for many decisions and they were known for discipline, scholarship, confidence, morality, neatness and integrity. Their

methodology was predominantly teacher-centered and they appeared as the repository of knowledge in their disciplines. Many of them were feared, as they carried canes around and their hands were always stained with chalk, ink or crayon. Most of these have changed now due to developments in information and communication technology and the standard requirements of quality education which is the fourth Sustainable

Development Goal and which demands the engagements of friendly and progressive teachers (Tata, 2017). Teachers are no more the repository of knowledge as the learners they teach are no more totally ignorant of the subject matter like before. These are changes in the positive and desirable direction and it has implications for teacher education.

But, there is another change which could be said to be undesirable. As teachers were known for discipline, scholarship, confidence and integrity, one cannot claim that today, beating the chest. In recent times, there have not only been instances where teachers were afraid of being tested for adequate knowledge in their subject areas, there have also been instances where they were so tested even with the examination questions of their students and they failed woefully (The Nation, 2012). The Silverbird Television News at Seven reported on the 4th June, 2019 that the National Examinations Council (NECO) complained that school Principals were aiding examination malpractice nationwide. That many teachers aid examination malpractice is no more news in Nigeria (Nnachi, 2017). These are also changes, though undesirable and these have implications for teacher education.

Why Teacher Education?

The teacher can be regarded as a trained person who helps others to acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and values. He/she is not only knowledgeable in his /her subject area but also skilled in imparting that knowledge in others. In the course of fulfilling his/her duties, the teacher is expected to possess certain qualities. He/she is expected to be prepared, set high expectations, instill confidence in students, manage the classroom effectively, use teaching strategies and practice self-reflection (Raudys, 2018). Moreover, he/she is supposed to be an engaging personality who has clear objectives for lessons and possesses effective discipline skills, passion for children and teaching and good communication with parents (Teaching. org, 2012).

These make the teacher a role model to the learners and when the teacher has a good rapport with learners, observations have shown especially at the basic education level that the learners tend to believe and trust the teacher's sayings than any other adult's. If the teacher is skillful in pedagogy, it is because he/she has undergone some training and it is this training that is referred to as teacher education. Predominantly, teacher education can be regarded as the policies, processes and procedures that are put together and implemented to make those who have to lead others to acquire

knowledge and skills adequately knowledgeable, skilled and experienced in the art of imparting the required knowledge and skills in others.

Teacher education therefore, generally focusses on upgrading the educational status and knowledge of pre-service teachers in general education principles and in their subject areas, exposing them to methods of teaching and good understanding of learning and learners as well as imparting in them the competencies necessary for good communication, human relations and evaluation while also presenting the opportunity for continuing professional development. What made teacher education more important in recent times is that quality education has been made the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (Bourne, 2015) and in explaining what constitutes quality education, scholars brainstormed and came with the holistic quality education eco-system which includes the quality of teachers (The Commonwealth Education Hub, 2016). In which case, quality education cannot be attained without competent teachers who are well remunerated and who have the required standard qualifications and work in conducive environment. In which case, quality education can only be provided by dedicated teachers who can give what the learners need, more so that teachers

ability plays a vital role in students' achievement (Popoola, 2016; Ross, 2018).

Teacher education, therefore, needs to produce reflective teachers, who will be instrumental to the total development of students, who will be friendly with students, who will have a sound knowledge of the subject matter, who will possess excellent communication skills and who will not only be disciplined but be able to instill that discipline in their students. Teacher education must have to deal with pre-service and in-service training, new pedagogies and technologies, motivation, discipline, decency, integrity, communication skills and conditions of service. It must start with policy in relation to who and who are recruited from top performance, like in South Korea (Top 5%), Finland (Top 10%) and Singapore (Top 30%) (Patinos, Bustillo and Wang, 2014). With this ensured, backed up with satisfactory remuneration, one can rest assured that teachers would properly fit into the traits which their ethics functionally demands. These include probity, integrity, dignity, civility and a high sense of accountability (Oladipo, Subair and Adebakin, 2010).

Necessity for Dynamism

Nothing appears static in most of human endeavours, not even the

deployment of education. This is because most materials and strategies for human civilization and education are researched and reviewed time and again. The 21st Century teacher is no more the sole reservoir of knowledge but a facilitator of knowledge who first has to search out latest developments as reported and lead students into acquiring desired knowledge through them. Beyond this, information and communication technology has so much developed that it should no more be difficult to find instructional materials to use when delivering instruction.

Assessing teacher education in Nigeria with this orientation, one cannot but observe challenges which show that much is yet to be done to make teacher education compliant with the requirements of the changing world. As Ogunsanwo and Salami (2010) observed, most of the teachers of early years' programmes in Nigeria neither have the required training nor experience. This becomes a serious issue when one considers that what they do (rightly or wrongly) forms the foundation on which the child's education is built. Teacher education in Nigeria would need to address this challenge.

To buttress the need for dynamism, Dada (2011) observed that knowledge is highly situated in contemporary contexts and it is rapidly changing and diverse than

ever before. Since literacy has become multi-model, she opined that if teacher education is not repositioned, Nigerian children will attempt to move towards the future and the institutions responsible for educating them would be locked in the past. This cannot be far from the truth as today's children are digital natives who toy with devices and applications, many of which their teachers do not own or have never seen. In a study on teacher's use of information and communication technology, Adeoluwa and Adegbola (2011) found that only 15% of teachers had access to the internet outside school and only 9.3% had access to the internet in school while only 25.5% accessed the internet to improve on their teaching. These are issues for teacher education, not only through in-service training but also for pre-service training.

But, entrants into the teacher education institutions must be easily trainable if they are to master the use of the developments in information and communication technology to lead learners into acquiring adequate knowledge. The present situation in Nigeria does not appear positive in this direction. As, Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee observed, less competent students choose teaching as a career. In actual fact, less competent prospective teachers choose to study education. In Nigeria, prospective higher education

candidates only make the College of Education where teachers are trained for basic education a third choice when completing admission request forms. In which case, only those who could not secure admission into the university or polytechnic are encouraged to proceed to the Colleges of Education.

Most of those who gain admission into the university also hardly opt to be trained as teachers as most of the students in the Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities are reluctantly there. We, therefore, turn out teachers whose level of motivation is low and many of who are less competent than graduates of other disciplines. Although this is not peculiar to Nigeria as India has the same challenge (Himmat, 2017), it however needs to be addressed. This may not be far from the poor societal perception of teacher education in Nigeria (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012). This is why some students studying education in the Universities are not always proud to mention their courses of study.

Funding is another vital challenge of teacher education in Nigeria. Most of the teacher training institutions are not adequately funded and when one visits them, there are always evidences of this experience in infrastructure. This is, however, not unconnected with the poor funding of education generally in Nigeria.

It has been claimed that, of the ₦61.48 trillionon budget of the Federal Government of Nigeria in ten years education only got a pitiful sum of ₦4.57 trillion. The 2019 allocation was 5.23% of the budget. This is considered as the worst in nine years in terms of percentages (Ndujihe, 2019),going by the World Bank data on government expenditure to education (The World Bank Group, 2019).

This has led to many other challenges including inadequate instructional and digital facilities, obsolete textbooks and library books and poor motivation in the teacher training institutions (Akpan, Ntukidem, Ekpiken and Efor, 2009; Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012; Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee, 2016). These challenges must also have a snowball effect on course content delivery which Akpan et.al. (2009) and Himmat (2017) regard as part of the challenges of teacher education. The conventional method is still very common in institutions training teachers whereas the developments in information and communication technology have brought in many strategies and devices which have engendered a paradigm shift in course content delivery.

The levity with which the teaching practice exercise appears to have been handled in many institutions cannot also be swept under the carpet. The teaching practice is not only an integral part of the

training of pre-service teachers but also that very aspect which defines the very nature of their profession. It is very important and it is supposed to be so treated. But, due to poor funding and frequent strikes by teachers of tertiary and public secondary schools, the exercise is shoddily done many times. This does not accord the would-be teachers the necessary experience needed to commence their teaching career.

Strategies for Revitalization

There is the urgent need to reposition teacher education to meet the needs of knowledge acquisition in this dynamic age. One must, however, recognize that the government of Nigeria had made attempts before now to improve on teacher education. The four-year Strategic Plan was prosecuted for the development of education between 2011 and 2015 in recognition of the fact that achieving the National Objectives of Nigeria would be dependent upon the development of education (Nasiru, 2013). Thousands of teachers had benefited from teacher professional development programmes, part of which had focused on the integration of information and communication technology tools in teaching and learning.

It is however, important that government must find a way of attracting the best into the education sector.

Admission into the colleges and Faculties of Education must be made competitive and attractive. This is necessary because teachers provide the foundation for all other vital professions. If that foundation is faulty, it would reflect in the quality of the products of other professions. Therefore, the selection procedures for admission into education courses must be thorough and without bias. This cannot be done when interested candidates are less than available spaces like in the current situation. Government must, therefore, put in place incentives that would attract the best into the teaching profession.

It is not out of place if scholarships and bursaries are provided for students studying education courses. This had been done before as one of the authors was a beneficiary. Some have even advocated that teaching practice allowance be paid to all students and special allowances be paid to university education students (Oladunjoye and Omenu, 2013). These would attract good students into studying education and this cannot but positively reflect on the learning outcomes of students in public schools and eventually on the sustainable development of the country.

It is also pertinent that more teachers be trained to deploy early childhood education in Nigeria. Not only that, governments should ensure that such trained professionals are the ones employed

by nursery schools in Nigeria, be they private or public. As it is now, the situation is different and if the proper foundation is not laid for the child, there is hardly anything to properly build on at the higher levels.

Nigerian government should endeavour to make institutions training teachers attractive to prospective teachers by providing adequate infrastructure in these institutions. Not only that, the schools must be tooled up with adequate state-of-the-art instructional facilities which would not only make the delivery of course contents easy but would also be a source of motivation to students and lecturers. This is a function of adequate funding of teacher training institutions. This must be prioritized if teacher education must be revitalized. Then will teacher trainers be happy and willing to update their methods of delivery to comply with the provisions of information and communication technology so that strategies like the flipped classroom, learner-generated content and mobile learning as well as the learning management system would easily be deployed to deliver course contents.

The teaching practice exercise should be made a continuous six-month programme like it is done with the students' industrial work experience scheme. This would reduce distractions and enable pre-service teachers to settle down in the

schools and go through the intended experience for which they were sent there. Beyond this, teachers should be placed on a special salary structure and very well paid so that they can concentrate on the job and devise inspirational and creative means of making students achieve much more. This is also another way of attracting more students into the education programmes in teacher training institutions.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the world is rapidly changing in all ramifications including the delivery of education. Conscious efforts need to be made to update teacher education not only to suit the dynamics of today but also to prepare for the innovations of tomorrow. With the readiness of government and other stakeholders in education, there is hope that teacher education can be revitalized in Nigeria so that quality education would be easily deployed to attain the national objectives of the country.

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