

TEACHER EDUCATION: AN IRONY

The Menace of Jeopardized Training Processes and Admission of Prospective Students (The Nigeria Experience)

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ABSTRACT

Human existence has always made provision that he who must lead others on any platform of existence must be subjected to vigorous exposures on the concept upon which he must lead. Standing out to be listened to suggests that one must have what to say that should be reasonable enough to prepare the hearers for the others who must benefit from what they heard. Teachers' training/education, which is one the core professions that bags the development of a nation and entire wellbeing of the populace is also part of this existence modalities that required such exposures. Most worrisome is the processes through which these development bedrock owners are admitted for training. It is on this framework that the present paper seeks to critically question the training processes and admission plan of prospectus students for teacher education. Through the concise examination of the training processes and admission of prospective students, the authors argued that failure to galvanize and articulate these processes may explain some of the major problems Africa nations face as they keep producing half-baked teachers, who transfer their half-baked knowledge to the wider society which they are meant to impact. It therefore suggested that to curb the menace of producing teacher' graduates without adequate or required training/discipline, teachers' training processes and adequate admission plan should be critically reviewed.

Keywords: Teacher Education, Training Processes, Admission of Prospective Students

INTRODUCTION

The quality and strength of a nation's development depends largely on the quality of education attainable in that nation. To this end, education greatly

reflects the key that unlocks the development of personal and national potential and all kinds of rights and powers (Akindutire, & Ekundayo, 2012). This has indeed generated an increased awareness on the importance of education to the development and wellbeing of both the individual and societal standards. Hence, it has influenced in people and nations a mindful-effort at devoting their meager resources to acquiring qualitative education, which also guarantees qualitative teacher training. Buttressing the importance of education, Balogun (2010) asserted that education is the light, without which, the whole world would be in darkness. In furtherance, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) adds that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self - sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievement.

It is plausible to assert however that what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available in the system; and this is greatly determined by the quality of teacher education/training. To explain this, Ibukun (2004) claimed that the quality of human resources in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of the effectiveness of educational programmes. Hence, achieving any socio-political, economic and scientific development in any country demands the need for qualified teachers who are equipped with the desired knowledge, skills, competence and commitment, and who are empowered to perform their tasks professionally (Akindutire & Ekundayo, 2012). This is vehemently cemented in the assertion of the National Policy on Education that, no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Thus, there is need for a critical look at the training processes and admission of prospective students into teacher's training college (i.e. Colleges of Education). This paper therefore discourses teacher education: the menace of jeopardized training processes and admission of Prospective Students (The Nigeria Experience).

Teacher Education

The terms teachers' education maybe best described as the professional training that teachers receive to be classified as professionals. It is a 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 (Okafor, 1988). It revolves around the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and skills required in the performance of effective duties in the classrooms and in other social gatherings including churches (Nakpodia & Urien, 2011).

As a training arm of the teaching profession, Ipaye (1996) explained that teacher education 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 (Nakpodia, &Urien, 2011).Furthermore, UNESCO (2005) opines that teacher education addresses environmental, social, and economic contexts to create locally relevant and culturally appropriate teacher education programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers. UNESCO (2005) further explains that teacher education generally includes four elements: improving the general educational background of the trainee teachers; increasing their knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are to teach; pedagogy and understanding of children and learning; and the development of practical skills and competences. The balance between these four elements varies widely (Perraton, 2010). Again,

literally documentation adds that teachers' education is divided into three stages namely:

- Initial Teacher Training
- The induction process involving the training and supports of the trainees during the 1st few years of teaching or the 1st year in a particular school
- Teacher development or continuing performing development and intensive process for practicing teachers

All of which must be attained by a supposed teacher to be professionally equipped and for the maintenance of relevance in the field of teaching.

Teacher Training and Admission of Prospective Students: A Mirage Cum Dilemma

Our Colleges of Education or Teacher Training Colleges house quite enormous number of prospective teaching students, whose aim maybe partly to acquire the required knowledge and competency for optimal functioning or performance in the teaching field. Majority of these students found themselves in these Colleges of Education as a result of frustration orchestrated by denial of admission into their school of choice or courses of choice amongst other reasons. Central to this section is the experience of one of the authors of this paper, who is a lecturer in one of the Colleges of Education, Rev. Fr. Dr. Jude Onebunne. Though a sad one, it was indeed an eye opener. He had tried to find out who amongst the students had the school as his or her first choice. It came to his amazement that ten (10) out of two hundred (200) students said with every conviction that the school was their first choice; whereas the other one hundred and ninety students said they came into the school by circumstance/chance. This however suggests that these one hundred and ninety (190) students maybe the failures, whose scores could not get them professional University courses such as Engineering, Law, Medicine etc. and had

being posted or admitted into the College of Education to study what they do not have flare for (most times). The result is indeed very disastrous, as these ones get certified (sometimes, with half-baked knowledge) to take up teaching jobs for the wards or children of the medical doctors, lawyers, engineering. Their products (students they impact) end up as paper graduates, leading to graduates that are not employable. This assertion has full backing of the famous Catholic Bishop, His Lordship, Matthew Hassan Kukah, who said in his population statement title **"The paradox of the Nigerian society"** that:

"Nigerian educational systems have surprising outcomes. The smartest students pass with First Class and get admitted to Medical and Engineering Schools. The Second Class students get MBAs and LLBs to manage with the First Class students. The Third Class students enter politics and rule both the First and Second Class students. The Failures enter the Underworld of crime and control the politicians and businesses. And best of all, those who did not attend school become Prophets and Imams and everyone follows them. What a paradox of life. This can only happen in Nigeria where corruption is the order of the day."

This to a greater extent affects the training processes as one gets to face individuals whose choices have been jeopardized and cajoled into nightmares and unfulfilled interests coming to be trained as future teachers.

Teaching as a Vocation and a Profession in the Contemporary Times

Going through the annals of history, one must agree that majority of those who had recorded enormous successes in what they engaged in, were those who had strong passion for what they set out to do. Unlike very many occupation/profession, teaching can be said to fall into the family of those profession, whose practitioners must have strong attraction for (a calling to

serve). It is this calling that makes it worthwhile. This is because, teaching is very tasking, requires much patience and skills because it is that arm of human existence through which man can be molded and remolded into desired being. It is also this strong passion towards a particular occupation or endeavours that helps to galvanize what one sets out to do into profession, hence, one cannot be totally wrong to opine that vocation is an occupation to which a person is specially drawn or for which she/he is suited, trained, or qualified.

As a matter of worry, the contemporary times presents a scenario where teaching (which must be a vocation and profession) turns into a profession of passage, with the practitioners being much engraved and interested in what compensation package there is for them rather than how to give their best to their profession. We have a generation of teachers who took up teaching jobs not because they have passion for it, but because man must survive. This results in divided loyalty, commitment and approach towards their teaching profession.

Judging from experience, this generation of teachers presents to the society, teachers who are depressed, filled with animosity, unsatisfied with their jobs and aggression and who displace this venom on the students who they are meant to mentor into responsible citizens of the society. Comparing this generation of teachers with the past generation teachers, one will see a clear cut difference, where the past generation had the best teachers who were contented, who were proud of what they were doing and were committed to what they were doing because they believed that they had a role in the decolonization process, development of the nation and making sure that they brought up younger ones that could excel perhaps, to exceed them. Central to this prowess is the understanding that they were called to contribute their quota to the development of others and the society at large - an understanding that can only exist when a profession is seen as a vocation.

To get our feet back on the ground, there is need to go back to the drawing board. This will help us greatly because teaching and teachers like medicine and medical practices, law and law practices, houses with them the development of a nation and its populace.

Jeopardized Teaching Professionalism: A Collective Contribution

Despite the huge importance attached to education as the bedrock of national and individual development, the system is drastically falling to an obvious rate. Teaching professionalism is gradually becoming a nightmare as the supposed teaching professionals consciously watch what is handed down to fizzle into the thin air, lacking in quality and skills. This for sure does not have a single root. It cuts across various dimensions that should make teaching a vocation and profession indeed. Suffice it to say that the government, teachers and teachers-in-training (i.e. prospective teaching students) play colossal part to the incessant decay of teaching professionalism, teaching processes and admission of prospective students in our society today.

On the side of the Government, evidence of their part is shown in inadequate funding of the education sector. This has indeed been a major challenge facing the education sector and has raised great concern in the minds of scholars such as Aina (2002), Durosaro (2006), Amadi (2007); Balogun (2010). To consolidate this saying, paper documentation revealed that Nigerian government, over the years has not been meeting the UNESCO recommendations of 26% of the total budgetary allocation to the education sector. For example, the allocation to Education in the National Budget for 2003, 2004 and 2005 were 7%, 12% and 11% (FRN 2005). To cap it up, Akindutire (2001) did explain that the poor funding of the teacher education since the 1980s has become a cause of worry to educationists as it affects the merits and standard of the certificates awarded to education graduates.

It also shows in inability to present the teachers with adequate motivation such as better pay, improved condition of service for serving teachers as well as bursary and scholarship award to education student at all levels. The absence of all these factors has been implicated on discouragement of new entrants to the profession and retaining of the old ones. It also leads to less motivation on the side of the teachers to do the job. This is largely supported by the assertion of Mmadike (2006) who found excess workload; low morale; inadequate remuneration; unattractive prospects for promotion and inadequate working conditions as sources of job dissatisfaction among university teachers in Nigeria.

On the side of the teachers, the part they play is shown in the following ways:

Non-committal Attitude Towards Teaching Job - The times we live in presents to us generation of teachers who are not committed to their teaching jobs. This shows in lack of enthusiasm to work; lack of concern for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; inadequate preparation for lessons; failure to write lesson notes; careless handling of statutory records and transfer of aggression to students. Nevertheless, lack of commitment often exhibited by these teachers can be implicated on poor income, delay in payment of salaries, lack of job satisfaction, feeling of unfulfilled interest amongst others (Ajayi & Shofoyeke, 2003).

Lack of Congruence between Teachers and their Teaching Profession

The contemporary times witness a breed of teachers who approach their profession with divided loyalty, because of their engagement in other tasks that demand their attention much more than their teaching profession. Often, one witnesses teachers that are full-time business men and women, farmers politicians etc. with the aim of getting streams of income to compliment their

teaching jobs, thereby giving their teaching profession little or less attention. Recall that one can hardly serve two masters at a time without lagging behind in fulfilling the expectations of each of the masters. This indeed endangers the progress of the profession.

The teachers-in-training (i.e. prospective teaching students) bastardize teaching professionalism by their lack of interest in building themselves (Self-development) for adequate performance in the field of teaching. It is indeed a regrettable scenario that in the now when knowledge is all over the place (newspapers, journals, the Super highway 'Internet' and so on) we are faced with students who do not avail themselves to the education that is all around them. Knowledge is chasing them all around and they are running away from it. This is not same with the generation before now, when students chased after education, despite the difficulty to get knowledge and unavailability of books.

This however resulted in inability to get to the required scores for admission into their courses of choice. At worst, these failures are bundled into the colleges of education to be trained as teachers, who will teach the younger generation. The question is: What will one who has no culture of reading and no adequate plan for acquiring adequate professional skills hand down to the generation next?

Quality Teachers Versus Quality Education

Every nation strives towards the provision of quality education for its citizens, because of the realization that education is necessary to engineer and consolidate any nation's developmental process (Akindutire, & Ekundayo, 2012). However, achieving quality education would be a mirage if there are no quality teachers. Akindutire and Ekundayo, (2012) compliment this when they said that what makes a good system of education depends on the quality of teachers available in the system; while Ibukun (2004) concludes it when he said that the

quality of human resources in form of teachers, often dictates the extent of the effectiveness of educational programmes.

Indeed, what makes a quality teacher is not tied to certificate occupancy alone, but greatly in being able to show adequate and quality teaching skills. It is only when this is achieved that quality education which makes for quality training processes is in view.

A PARADIGM SHIFT TO THE REQUIRED CUM RECOMMENDATION

In the contemporary times, the teacher education, processes and admission plan for prospective teaching students has been source of concern to most education stakeholders. Needless to say is the poor quality of teachers produced who are expected to hand down the skilled acquired to the younger generation. Despite the awareness that teachers constitute the most important input in the system that determines the quality of output, more important than the amount of resources on ground, it is plausible to note that if training processes and admission plan of prospective teaching students are not adequately reviewed and articulated, the entire nation is in shamble. Therefore, the authors recommended that adequate and well reviewed and articulated training processes and admission plan (where strict measures are placed on who is given admission to study in the Teacher Training Colleges and Colleges of Education) should be applied to save the continual fall in our education system.

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