MANAGING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMANCIPATION
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Abstract

A nation's social, economic, and political emancipation is ineluctably connected with functional education systems in which people learn to create new institutions, utilize new technologies, cope with vagaries and difficulties in their environment, and positively alter their behavioral patterns. Education in a broad sense improves individuals' and institutions' capacities. It catalyzes closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and political changes that are hallmarks of national development. Nevertheless, a teacher stands out as a crucial figure within any educational institution, significantly influencing these changes and transformations. Teacher education is broad. This is based on the praxis that teachers are created in contrast to the assumption that teachers are born. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher must acquire knowledge and the requisite skills needed to carry out his or her duties or services. The efficiency and effectiveness of every educational system hinge significantly on teachers' academic achievements. After all, no education can surpass the quality of its educators. Thus, every nation places demands and expectations on the teacher, which must be addressed by both initial and ongoing teacher education. On this note, this paper examines teacher education with respect to its praxis and professionalism, examines the nexus between teacher education and socioeconomic as well as political emancipation, analyses the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria, and in the final analysis, provides recommendations based on the identified challenges.

1. Introduction

Education is a veritable instrument for national growth and development. It produces different kinds of manpower, such as engineers, teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, architects, soldiers, scientists, etc. equipped with knowledge and skills needed and instrumental to the societal socio-political and economic growth and development of a country (Thom-Otuya and Inko-Tariah, 2016). Similarly, the socio-economic and political

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emancipation of a country is invariably hinged on the functionality of the educational systems that such a country operates. Thus, the sayings that, "no society can develop beyond its educational system" and that "no education can rise above the quality of its teachers" (National Policy on Education {FRN}, 2013) could be deemed apt and axiomatic. Indeed, if students are considered the core of every educational system, teachers undoubtedly represent the central hub of the entire educational process.

Significantly, the quality of a nation depends on the quality of its citizens, while the quality of its citizens depends not exclusively but in a crucial measure on the quality of education, and the quality of education depends (more than upon any single factor) on the quality of their teachers (Ifunanya, Onyia and IketakuI, 2013). This shows the urgency of teacher education as the roles of teachers in every society are becoming indispensable. Teachers are the essence of any educational endeavor, upon whom the vitality of the school system is frequently relied. They belong to a profession with unparalleled potential to shape the social, economic, political, and moral trajectory of a nation. This reality highlights the imperative for teacher education to be regarded as a sacred obligation that is never trifled with if teaching is to fulfill its professional duty of nurturing generations of profoundly responsible, disciplined, and productive citizens. (Uchechi, 2011).

Teacher education can be conceptualized as the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, behavior, and skills they require to perform their tasks in the school and classroom effectively and efficiently (Kumar, 2010). It also involves the component of any educational system charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire competencies and teaching skills to improve teachers, students, and the entire school system. In addition, teacher education nurtures prospective teachers and updates qualified teachers' knowledge and skills through continuous professional development (Nnokam and Sule, 2017). Training and/or education occurs before the start of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job).

The quality of teacher education is often dependent on the quality of teacher educators. Similarly, the quality of pedagogical inputs in teacher education programs and their effective use in preparing prospective teachers depend largely on the professional competence of teacher educators and how they are used to strengthen the teacher education program. Teacher education in Nigeria is overseen by Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), and the Faculties of Education within Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Institutes of Education within universities offer distance learning and part-time courses, accommodating educators aiming for NCE, B.Ed., and PGDE certificates upon program completion. In contrast, faculties of education primarily concentrate on preparing preservice teachers for qualifications ranging from B.E. to Ph.D.

Emancipation can be contextualized as the action or state of liberating oneself or others from any form of constraint or oppression. It encompasses the process of breaking free from shackles, whether physical, social, or psychological, and gaining freedom and autonomy.; liberation or freedom from inhibition and convention (Akanbi and Jekayinfa, 2019). It can be described as the act or process by which a person, society, or nation is free from the power, authority, and control of another person or any institution that has hitherto been hampering the progress and/or advancement of such a person, society, or institution. Thus, the socio-economic and political emancipation of people in this study refers to the economic, social, and political empowerment of people after receiving education, which essentially brings about their freedom and sustainable means of living. The current crisis in Nigerian education encompasses many challenges that deeply impact both the educational system and society at large. Some prominent issues include unemployment, poverty, corruption, crime, indiscipline, and underutilization of capacities in all facets of human endeavor, which could be partly ascribed to the neglect of teacher education and the pitiable plight of teachers in every phase of education in the country (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015).

One hallmark of a nation's quest for achieving self-reliance in all its facets as characterized by social, economic, and political freedom with an appreciable level of growth, development, and welfare is teacher education. Furthermore, to ensure that its youth are taught valuable skills and are part of a thriving economy, the country must implement a comprehensive teacher education program (Adewuyi, 2012). In the light of the foregoing, this paper examines teacher education in the context of its praxis and professionalism, examines the nexus between teacher education and socio-economic as well as political emancipation, analyses the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria, and draws conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

2. Teacher Education: Praxis and Professionalism

Teacher education is predicated on the theory that: teachers are made and not born, in contrast to the assumption that teachers are born and not made. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher must acquire knowledge and skills inherent in praxis and professionalism. Teacher education is broad. It encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory, and professional skills. Teaching skills involve providing training and practice in different techniques, approaches, and strategies that help teachers plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement, and conduct an effective assessment. These skills also encompass effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials, and communication skills.

On the other hand, Pedagogical theory includes philosophical, sociological, and psychological considerations that would enable teachers to have a sound basis for practicing teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage-specific and is based on the needs and requirements characteristic of each stage. In addition, professional skills are related to techniques, strategies, and approaches that would help teachers grow in the profession and work toward the growth of the profession. These include soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieval and management skills, and, above all, lifelong learning skills.

Teacher Education has invariably received strong emphasis in national policy (FRN, 2013) on education because of the belief that no educational system can surpass the caliber of its teachers. Thus, in the document (FRN, 2013), the goals of Teacher Education are spelled out as follows: produce highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system; further encourage the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers; help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; provide teachers with an adequate intellectual and professional background for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2013).

In addition, it is also stated that teacher education should continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and curriculum, and teachers should be regularly exposed to innovations in the profession. Besides, the policy equally specifies that provisions should be made for the improvement and regulation of career-long professional development of teachers through the provision of a wide range of programs and multiple pathways to provide serving teachers with regular opportunities for updating their knowledge and skills; improved conditions of service and incentives to motivate teachers and make the teaching profession more attractive; professional standards for teacher educators who train new teachers and revamping teacher education curricula and training (FRN, 2013).

Furthermore, the term 'praxis' is an ancient Greek concept that was popularized by the prominent Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. According to him, praxis is a synthesis of theory and practice in which each informs the other (Freire, Paulo, 1985). The kernel of his thought could be encapsulated in the aphorism that "action without reflection is blind, and reflection without action is impotent." Praxis appears in different fields and disciplines, including education, political theory, social and community work, and others. Pedagogical praxis is an integral

but mainly important part of the process of pre-gradual teacher preparation for all levels of education. Nevertheless, pedagogical praxis is realized mainly to develop the professional competencies of future teachers. Pedagogical praxis as a form of experience-based professional learning enables the students of teaching (the trainees) to develop professional as well as personal competencies in cooperation with trainers (Sirotová, 2016). Teacher education is considered training for instrumental problem solving, which broadly implies the classroom application of theories and teaching techniques. The ideal is to provide teacher education that seamlessly integrates the theory of education and its practice within the real world so that future teachers can translate new views and theories about learning into actual teaching practices in schools (Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen, 2007). The teacher education program is divided into three categories. First, the initial teacher training (a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher) occurs mostly in institutions of higher education. The second is the induction of teachers. This involves the process of offering guidance and assistance in the initial years of teaching or the first year in a certain school. The third equally has to do with teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD), which is an in-service process for practicing teachers.

To view teaching as a highly-skilled practice, one that requires close training is to respect the professional demands of the work. However, the common resistance to the notion of detailed professional preparation and even the need for training stands in the way of improving teachers 'preparation for teaching. People come to teacher education with their beliefs, values, commitments, personalities, and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling. Helping future teachers critically examine their beliefs and values as related to teaching, learning, and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education (Vedika, 2016).

3. Teacher Education: A Recipe for Socio-Economic and Political Emancipation of Nigeria

The connection between education and development has been a subject of contemplation and discussion since ancient times. Plato and Aristotle's thoughts on education and its relationship to the state have indeed influenced political philosophy for centuries. Their ideas suggest that the nature of education reflects the character and aspirations of a society and that the state's goals should be mirrored in its educational system (Akinsanya, 2004). The truism that education is the surest way to sustainably develop any person or society (socially, economically, and politically) needs no contention. Teacher education plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political liberation of individuals in any geopolitical space. One of its primary functions is to facilitate the development of the attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge necessary for making informed decisions that benefit individuals and others, both in the present and in the future. Furthermore, it encourages individuals to translate these decisions into action, thereby fostering personal growth and social progress.

Educational institutions play a leading role in building more sustainable societies and creating new paradigms as they have the mission to promote development and bring about socio-economic and political emancipation through both teaching and research. However, it should be noted that these laudable objectives can only be accomplished through teachers who are trained in values and perspectives on socioeconomic and political emancipation. Hence, teacher education could be aptly regarded as a crucial catalyst for advancing social, economic, and environmental values conducive to sustainable development within society (Johnson, 2007). Since societies are not static entities, as they undergo constant and rapid development and change, education becomes more a condition of coping with reality.

One of the primary objectives of teacher education is to cultivate highly competent professional educators who can adapt to the evolving needs of students and the progressive demands of contemporary society (Oyekan, 2006). Hence, a powerful strategy that any government can employ to advance a nation's development and liberate it

from socioeconomic and political challenges is to bolster the education of its educators, that is, teachers. This is crucial because a nation's prosperity and influence are intrinsically linked to the effective education of its population and the presence of skilled individuals across all sectors of society.

The management of teacher education is a technical business. Generally, teacher education is inclusive, comprehensive, and dynamic and requires diverse inputs. Efficient management of any of the programs involved entails consideration of various things, among which are not limited to: the administration of every stage of teacher education, the political and education philosophies, policy design and formulation for the program, the teacher education curriculum, the historical facts concerning the development of and trends in the teacher education program and then investment in the program (Nyerere, 2009). Without thorough education and pedagogical training focused on teaching advanced curricula, teachers risk transmitting a societal message that prioritizes academic adequacy over excellence, potentially hindering students' aspirations for higher achievement (UNESCO, 1996, p. 37). Apart from this, it should focus on preparing and training school teachers to confidently initiate and participate efficiently in modern development-related activities. This strategy was exploited by the "Asian Tigers" to promote and accelerate their national growth and development (Jung-Li, 2001).

The socio-economic and political emancipation of people in any nation is predicated on the adequate knowledge of the people in such a nation because "a mind that knows is a mind that is free" (an aphorism contained in the last stanza of the University of Ibadan School Anthem). Hence, teacher education must be given special priority in the country's educational planning and development. This implies that a teacher who is highly trained, qualified, and competent is capable of transmitting the knowledge and skills acquired to the learners. The learner (students) will, in turn, construct knowledge through their interpretive interaction with the experiences in their social environments, creating jobs for self-reliance instead of being job seekers, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the nation's economy and also aiding in alleviating poverty in society as they employ other people to work with (Nyerere, 2009).

To harness teacher education as a tool for social transformation amid socioeconomic and political challenges, it is crucial to develop alternative teacher education programs. These programs should bolster the availability of teachers in areas facing shortages, whether due to geographic factors or specific subject demands, such as IT or languages. Nigeria has the flexibility to tailor these programs to suit their particular requirements and the characteristics of the individuals they attract to the teaching profession. This could involve adjusting entry requirements, teacher certification methods, and financing mechanisms. An inclusive approach enables the integration of these pathways with existing ones: conventional and alternative teacher training programs should be viewed not as rivals but as complementary to each other. Similarly, establishing systematic teacher certification and accreditation of teacher education institutions is essential.

Teacher education is in a constant state of evolution that responds to the dynamic nature of society. To ensure that teachers are well-equipped to tackle the challenges of our rapidly changing world. Teacher education programs must remain up-to-date with the latest developments and trends. The core of the entire teacher education process lies in its curriculum, encompassing its design, structure, organization, instructional methods, and suitability to meet the needs of both students and society. The social and economic development of a nation is fundamentally an education process in which people learn to create new institutions, utilize new technologies, cope with their environment, and alter their patterns of behavior. Education in a broad sense improves individuals' capabilities and institutions' capacities and becomes a catalyst for closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes.

4. Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria: Analyses of Issues and Probable Panaceas to the Identified Challenges

Every educational institution in any geopolitical space (country) is established and saddled with the responsibility of not only transmitting knowledge to transform the economy and modernize society but also building the human capacity needed for accelerated economic growth and development as well as influencing the diversification of the economy to alleviate poverty and improve the standard of living of the people (Jaiyeoba, 2018; Adedeji, 2022). Over the years, teacher education in Nigeria has witnessed several challenges. Despite numerous recommendations and reforms intended to reposition teacher education in Nigeria for better performance, the challenges are complex and multifaceted, much like the mythical Hydra with its many heads. Some of these challenges in teacher education arise due to shifts in socioeconomic and political circumstances over time. Others developed because of government disregard for the education sector, particularly in terms of adapting to evolving realities such as Nigeria's expanding population and the increasing demand for education services and facilities. Some of these challenges and their suggested solutions to the identified problems are specifically examined as follows;

4.1 System of Accreditation of Higher Learning Institutions

The accreditation system for teacher education programs in Nigeria, across different institutions and faculties, is currently far from ideal. It is managed by various bodies that are often plagued by crises and hindered by administrative obstacles. Regrettably, the current system for accrediting faculties and institutions to offer teacher education programs is disorganized and fails to meet satisfactory standards. There exists a plethora of disparate and unaligned entities and institutions, including University Senates, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Universities Commission (NUC), as well as Federal and State Ministries of Education, facilitated through bodies like the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC), the National Council for Education, Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), and the Teachers Registration Council (TRC), which oversees a national registry and sets standards for educators (Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee, 2016). There is an urgent need to overhaul and reengineer accreditation as far as teacher education is concerned.

4.2 Poor Implementation of Education Policies

Poor policy implementation indeed poses a significant challenge to the quality delivery of teacher education in Nigeria. Policies that are not effectively implemented can lead to a lack of proper resources, inadequate training for teachers, and insufficient support systems, all of which contribute to poor quality education. This, in turn, results in low-performing graduates from teacher education institutions. However, several factors could be adduced as inhibitors to the smooth implementation of educational policies, which would result in poor-quality delivery. Examples of these are government underfunding of education and injudicious use of available funds by implementation agencies: vice-chancellors, rectors, provosts, deans of faculties, heads of departments, and principals.

4.3 Internal Efficiency and Quality Assurance Issues

Candidates seeking admission to teacher education programs in Nigerian tertiary institutions often exhibit academic and emotional attributes that are pivotal for ensuring quality assurance and internal efficiency. There is a noticeable pattern wherein individuals applying for teacher education programs are either unsuccessful in gaining admission to their preferred fields of study or lack the necessary qualifications for admission into highly sought-after professional courses such as medicine, law, engineering, and architecture. The typical lack of applicants vying for admission into programs geared toward preparing them as educators in universities and colleges serves as an indication of why the admission and placement processes in education programs are not as stringent as those in other programs mentioned earlier. This deviation from international standards for teacher selection is noteworthy. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) advocates for selecting teachers based on their moral, intellectual, and physical attributes. In advanced countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, China, and others, candidates are required to demonstrate specific intellectual abilities and personal

traits before being accepted for training (adapted from Lassa, 1998). In contrast, Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education prioritize students' admissions mainly on meeting minimum academic standards, often neglecting other globally acknowledged criteria like emotional stability, physical fitness, moral integrity, and communication skills.

4.4 Teachers' Recruitment and Training

The recruitment process and subsequent training for individuals entering the teaching profession lack seriousness and long-term vision. This has led to a situation in which even school dropouts can become teachers, diminishing the value and prestige of the profession and turning it into a last resort for those who have struggled in other career paths. The quality and quantity of a nation's teaching force play a crucial role in the successful execution of its educational policies. It is essential to prevent individuals lacking competence from entering this esteemed profession. Therefore, governments should exclusively recruit trained and qualified teachers to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the educational system.

4.5 Poor Funding

Teacher education faces significant challenges because of insufficient funding from all levels of government. Consequently, there is a lack of essential teaching and learning resources, outdated textbooks, deteriorating school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequately equipped facilities, including a shortage of advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems. It is disheartening to acknowledge that the Nigerian government allocates less than the presumed 26% of its national budget to education, which falls significantly below the standard recommended by UNESCO. Consequently, there are concerns regarding the quality of graduates produced by the education system.

4.6 Professionalization of Teaching

The need for the professionalization of teaching has become imperative given the advent of new technology and knowledge explosion that demands better-trained teachers at the various levels of the educational sector. Essentially, professionalism should be seen as the ability of the practitioners of an occupation to enforce its rules and regulations in terms of autonomy and prestige, ethics, work conditions, admission into the field, training, certification, and registration. Unfortunately, teaching in Nigeria is yet to be fully accorded full recognition as a profession because it has no direct and systematic control status, poor remuneration of teachers, and lack of political will on the part of the teachers' registration council to enforce its code of ethics and standards. Numerous teachers in Nigeria do not meet the minimum international standards. This is largely due to the retention of a significant number of untrained and inadequately skilled personnel within the system, resulting in a lack of professionalization in the teaching career. Many unqualified teachers are still employed by some State Teaching Service Boards, and a considerable portion of higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in the faculty of education. Unless the government mandates this training and actively implements the policy, teaching will remain accessible to anyone, posing a risk of further undermining professionalism.

4.7 Ineffective and Inefficient Organization of Teaching Practices

The importance of teaching practice in teacher education programs cannot be overstated. However, many Nigerian higher education institutions lack a focus on effectively organizing teaching practices. There exists a significant disparity in the duration of teaching practice among these institutions, with some offering it for an entire term, others for six weeks, and others for less than six weeks. These variations have notable implications for the standards and, consequently, the quality of teacher education across the country. Furthermore, teaching practice supervision is vulnerable to various biases. For example, certain assessment tools used in teaching practice are

subjective and can be interpreted differently depending on the supervisor's background, training, and personal inclinations.

4.8 Lack of and insufficient Knowledge regarding the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Another significant challenge facing teacher education in Nigeria is the lack of and inadequate knowledge and utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) in an increasingly globalized world. Proficiency in computer technology and internet usage is essential for all educators to ensure the relevance of the educational system and its outcomes in the 21st century. Unfortunately, many schools in Nigeria continue to adhere to traditional educational methods with minimal or no integration of ICT. Numerous schools in Nigeria continue to employ traditional educational approaches, often without incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To harness the abundance of information and foster communication within professional networks, teachers require continuous training and access to ICT resources. The government must provide facilities that enable teachers and students to access such technologies without interruption, particularly as the world continues to evolve into a global village. Osokoya (2012) contended that prospective educators must embrace new technologies and methodologies to function effectively and adapt to the demands of modern times.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), the primary aim of teacher education is to equip teachers with the necessary intellectual and professional foundation for their roles. Despite the commendable objectives and attempts by successive Nigerian government administrations to enhance the system, teacher education programs in Nigerian institutions of higher learning often lack quality and fail to meet international standards. Achieving national development, including socioeconomic and political advancement, and diversification of Nigeria's economy, necessitates prioritizing investment in human capital through teacher education. The Nigerian educational system must be adaptable to the technological, social, and economic demands of society to produce the human resources required for industrial and economic sectors. The fulfillment of organized education's potential as a potent tool for change and national development predominantly relies on teachers' capabilities.

Based on a thorough assessment of the current situation, the following recommendations are put forward: i. the government must ensure timely payment of teachers' salaries and allowances and promote them as per their due. ii. Regular workshops and seminars should be held for teachers across various subjects at least once per term to foster their professional growth and development. iii. Rigorous supervision of teachers is necessary to guarantee the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. iv. The government should prioritize the recruitment of qualified teachers while identifying and removing unqualified or incompetent individuals, including quack teachers, from the education system. In addition, there is an urgent need to develop educational programs tailored for experienced or "old" teachers, aimed at equipping them with the new skills, attitudes, and values necessary for social integration and knowledge enhancement. The formal educational system, particularly teacher education, serves as a vital institutional mechanism for fostering human skills and knowledge development.

Given that the success of any training program in the education sector relies heavily on competent teachers to administer it, teacher education rightfully deserves the highest priority in the training and education of teachers. It is not an exaggeration to assert that by professionalizing teaching and prioritizing teacher education as the focal point of socio-economic and political advancement in Nigeria, there are tendencies that teachers' productivity would be enhanced, mitigation of systemic issues in the educational sector would be attained, ensuring effective service delivery would be attained while the involvement of other sectors of society (in contributing to economic

diversification), and positioning education as the paramount instrument for national development could be ensured without further ado.

In the final analysis, there is a pressing need to overhaul the current structure of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) to make it more proactive in upholding the codes of ethics and standards of the teaching profession. Such a reorganization would help prevent education from becoming a default option for candidates who see teaching as their last resort.

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