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CONTEMPORARY REFORMS IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE NIGERIA EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Contemporary reforms in teacher education in Nigeria have been implemented to address the challenges within the education system and improve the quality of teaching. These reforms aim to enhance the competence and professionalism of teachers, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes for students. Key reforms include the review of the teacher education curriculum, focusing on aligning it with current educational goals and standards. Pedagogical training has been emphasized, equipping teachers with effective instructional strategies and learner-centered approaches. Additionally, continuous professional development has been prioritized to ensure teachers stay updated with the latest trends and techniques in education. One of the significant reforms is the review of the teacher education curriculum. The curriculum has been updated to align with current educational goals and standards. It focuses on developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective teaching and learning. Emphasis has been placed on equipping teachers with effective pedagogical techniques and instructional strategies. These reforms aim to transform teacher education in Nigeria and create a more effective and impactful teaching workforce.

Keywords: School reforms, professional development, contemporary reforms, teacher education

Keywords:

1. Introduction

Teacher education in Nigeria has witnessed a lot of innovation leading to reforms. However, some of the innovations are rather controversial. For example, many educationists and stakeholders in education question the wisdom

in phasing out Teacher Training Colleges (T.T.C) commenting that it has created structural imbalance in teacher education in Nigeria. Also, proliferation of Colleges of Education in Nigeria is responsible for compromised admission and production of poor

quality holders of the Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) with a lot of damaging implications to educational development in Nigeria.

Reorientation of teacher education is essential for the whole society to face the challenges of the 21st century. This includes intellectual independence of individual creation and advancement of constructive knowledge, qualified experts and specialists, without whom no nation could progress economically, socially, culturally or politically. The importance of powerful teaching is increasingly important in contemporary society. Standards for learning are now higher than they have ever been before, as citizens and workers need greater knowledge and skill to survive and succeed. What obtains now in the majority of our teaching colleges and training institutions are woefully inadequate in the context of changing needs of the country today. Learning, teaching, identifying educational goals, and thinking are all complicated concepts interwoven in a complex web. There are three dimensions of education like development of knowledge, training of mental abilities, and development of character. On account of rapid changes in technology, continuous updating of knowledge is necessary for teacher educators. Advances in multimedia applications are going to add a new dimension in teacher education programme. The World Wide Web (www) is becoming more interactive and multi-dimensional, incorporating multimedia presentations.

The technologies for gaining, sharing and applying knowledge are changing rapidly. At present knowledge tends to grow at an exponential rate in the world. There is an urgent need for focusing on exploiting knowledge for our future prosperity and well being & our development. The field of teacher education is innovative in nature. Thus it is seen that teacher education in this century is in for radical changes, unless the society is willing to be

indifferent about quality and relevance, the nature of secondary teacher education has to change from the present status. For exploiting the opportunities in the knowledge-based society, an excellent system of teacher education is essential.

Since the teacher is so central in the education process, issues concerning the teacher especially teacher education should not be considered as over-flogged. Teacher education has come a long way from the advent of western education Nigeria. A lot of reforms and innovation have taken place since then, yet teacher education has a lot of challenges to contend with. This is why a critical review of the reforms and innovation was subsisted at each of the periods reviewed. The objective was to find out why the various reforms and innovation did not seem to largely improve teacher education in Nigeria. For example, Colleges of Education, Faculties of Education, Institutes of Education, among others still have a lot of challenges. Also, stakeholders still complain of poor quality of the products of teacher educational institutions despite some reforms and innovations.

2. Meaning of Reforms

The New Webster's Dictionary (1995) defines reform as to improve by removing faults and weaknesses or by strengthening good qualities; to put an end (to an evil, abuse, etc) to correct. Ubi and Idowu (2013) stated that reform means to improve by alteration, correction of errors, removal of defects and put into a better form. They further stated that educational reform can be described as adoption of innovation with the ultimate goal to improve educational outcomes through an alteration of practices by educational stakeholders. Ugwuadu and Oparah (2013) also defined reform as the improvement or amendment of what is wrong, corrupt, unsatisfactory, etc. They distinguished reform from revolution stating that the latter means basic or radical change whereas reform may be

no more than fine tuning, or at most, redressing serious wrongs without altering the fundamentals of the system. In the case of teacher education, reform means actions aimed at improving or amending what is wrong, corrupt, unsatisfactory, etc in achieving the goals of teacher education.

3. Concept of Teacher Education

The National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE) has developed the National Curriculum Framework of Teacher Education, which was come out in March 2009. This Framework was prepared in the background of the NCF, 2005 and the principles laid down in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. It was necessitated an altered framework on Teacher Education which would be consistent with the changed philosophy of school curriculum recommended in the NCF, 2005. When we look at tomorrow's world, tomorrow's career building and tomorrow's huge potential of interpersonal relationships, the power of knowledge is useful many times. The NCTE prepared the curriculum framework for teacher education in 1998 and for the first time made the recommendation for beginning a two-year B.Ed. programme to prepare quality teachers. Therefore NCTE formulated the (Recognition Norms and Procedure) Regulations, 2014 of national policy for higher education for B.Ed, course duration as two years in India. The NCTE assisted to improve the quality of teacher education in terms of modern curriculum. This programme is comprised of three broad inter-related curricular areas-perspectives in education, curriculum and pedagogic studies and Engagement with the Field.

In our country teacher education is production oriented rather than consumer oriented. If we see the quality in teacher, we always see following major aspect must develop in the teacher. It means a teacher has some things like classroom management skill, mastery over the

content, classroom transaction and mastery over the different method of teaching.

4. The Emergence of Teacher-Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria was pioneered by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) which established the first teacher-training college known as "The Training Institution" (Fafunwa, 1995, Maduwesi and Ezeoba, 2010). This first teacher educational institution was established in Abeokuta in 1859. According to Fafunwa, the school was moved to Lagos in 1867 when the European missionaries were expelled from Abeokuta. Other teacher training colleges that followed were the Baptist Training College Ogbomoso (1897) and the Wesley College Ibadan (1905). Establishment of those colleges was informed by the urgent need to provide institutions for training of catechists and teachers. Because teacher training colleges were yet to be established in the eastern Nigeria then, Missions in the Eastern part were providing informal training for teachers and catechists through the apprenticeship system as homeless boys and children of converted village heads lived with the missionaries and were taught to become pupil teachers and catechists.

In 1892, the Hope Waddell (Training) institute was established while in the northern part of Nigeria, the training of teachers started with the establishment of the Nassarawa school by the government in 1909 under the leadership of Hans Vischer, the then Director of education for northern Nigeria. Presently in Nigeria, teacher education is provided by colleges of education, faculties of education, Institutes of Education, National Teachers Institute, among others (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004).

5. Colonial Period Reforms of Teacher Education (1859-1959)

The picture of teachers during the early period of missionary/colonial education in Nigeria as painted by Fafunwa (1995) was not funny at all. The teacher trainees were drawn from Standard

VI. Before starting the two-year training course, they were expected to have served as pupil teachers for two years and to have passed the pupil-teacher examination and then to have acted as assistant teachers. At the end of the two years they took a prescribed teachers' certificate examination and were certified if they passed the examination. Note that those pitiable teachers would combine school work with church work. Consequently, the curriculum of the early training institutes combined theology with teaching methods. As commented above, prisoners would by far be happier than those early school teachers. Their saving grace, however, was the Phelps-Stokes Report of 1925 which criticized this system of teacher training as being unsatisfactory.

6. Reforms in Teacher Education: 1960-1980

The first innovation which led to a reform immediately after independence occurred in higher educational institutions in Nigeria. It started with the setting up of the Ashby Commission in 1959. Fafunwa (1995) noted that teacher education at the university level was on the horns of a dilemma when the Ashby Commission was set up. The commission recommended that higher education must be built upon the foundations laid by the primary and secondary education and that if the foundations were too weak or too narrow, higher education would not be able to meet the required needs of the nation. The Commission's report also noted the imbalance between elementary, secondary and higher education. It therefore recommended that one out of every two teachers in a secondary school should be a graduate. The commission specifically recommended that a new corps of Grade I teachers also styled well-qualified, non graduate teachers should be trained to man the lower levels of secondary schools and teacher training colleges (then).

Government accepted the recommendations of

the Commission and started establishing Grade I Teachers' Colleges which in 1962 metamorphosed into Advanced Teachers Colleges (ATCs) later christened Colleges of Education (Enyi, 2011). The first generation of those ATCS which transformed into Colleges of Education (C.O.E.s) were established at Lagos (1962), Zaria (1962), Owerri (1963), Ondo (1964) and Kano (1964). According to Enyi (2011), the establishment of COEs marked a turning point in teacher education and its professionalization because it was designed to meet the middle-level manpower needs of Nigerian economy especially in the education sector. It was meant for the training and production of branded teachers, well qualified non-graduate teachers who will teach at the primary and secondary levels of education.

Another reform which resulted from the recommendations of the Ashby Commission's Report was the introduction of Bachelor of Arts degree in Education (B.A.ED) in all Nigeria universities. The objective of this innovation was to assist in the preparation of graduate teachers (i.e. graduates who had no teaching qualifications but were teaching). This led to the launch of a three year Bachelor of Arts and Science combined honours degree in education (B.A. and B.Sc. Ed.) at the University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) in September 1961. UNN example was followed by University of Ibadan in 1963, Ahmadu Bellow University in 1964, the University of Lagos in 1965 and the University of Ife in 1967. To ensure a steady flow of this cadre of graduates (with B.A/B.Sc education), the Federal Government launched a crash programme for teachers in 1968. Its purpose was to produce some 2,000 graduate and Nigeria Certificate in Education (N.C.E) teachers annually for five years to enable Nigerians to man Nigeria schools within the foreseeable future (Fafunwa, 1995). Another reform in teacher education in Nigeria within this period under review was the establishment of the National Teachers Institute (NTI) through

Decree No 7 of 1976. The NTI headquarter was located in Kaduna.

7. Reforms and Innovation in Teacher Education in the National Policy on Education

The 1969 National Curriculum Conference eventually produced the National Policy on Education which was first published in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 (unpublished), and 2013. It reaffirmed that teachers will continue to be given a major emphasis in all educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Emetarom (2012) noted that the National Policy on Education (1977) opened a new page in the development of teacher training programmes in Nigeria.

The NPE also stated that all teachers in Nigeria education institutions from pre-primary to the University will be professionally trained and that teacher education programmes will be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. This was an obvious response to some of the reports of the Ashby Commission of 1959, that over 90% of primary school teachers and 70% of secondary school teachers in Nigeria were neither fully trained nor qualified for their work' (Enyi, 2011:2). The Report, accordingly, recommended, among other things, the massive training of teachers for a period of not less than 10 years for the primary and secondary levels of education. After phasing out the Grade II Colleges (TTC) and making NCE the minimum basic qualification for entry into the teaching profession in Nigeria, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was set up to supervise, monitor and accredit the Colleges of Education to ensure some uniformity in standards of curriculum and implementation. It has been stated earlier that the National Teachers Institute (NTI) was set up to upgrade serving Grade II teachers to the NCE level through the distant learning method. Also, some

of the COEs run part-time or sandwich NCE programme either for serving teachers or some candidates desiring the certificate.

The Special Teachers Upgrading Programme (STUP) was yet another innovation in teacher education in Nigeria. Iloputaife, Maduwesi and Igbo (2010) explained that all Grade II teachers in service were given a deadline of December 2006 to upgrade to the NCE or leave service. However, as at the deadline, there were still over 150,000 teachers without the NCE nationwide. The deadline had to be shifted by another two years during which a Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP) was introduced for the teachers to acquire the NCE with emphasis on primary education. A lot of the reforms and innovation were introduced at the tertiary level particularly Colleges of Education and the universities. The Sandwich programme is of particular interest in teacher education. Sandwich programmes are the educational programmes that are run during the school vacations to create opportunities for civil servants. They were established and run by many tertiary institutions in Nigeria most especially the Universities and Colleges of Education. Sandwich programmes in Nigeria dates back to the mid eighties.

Teachers also participate in weekend programmes. These are run by some Universities, Nigerian Teachers' Institute (NTI) and Polytechnics. Both serving and intending teachers have used the weekend programmes to acquire degrees and upgrade their status.

Correspondence learning is another reform which has been of benefit in teacher education. According to Ugadu (2008), correspondence learning was formerly referred to as the Correspondence and Open Studies Unit but later, it was redefined to produce university graduates in disciplines necessary to meet national labour need e.g teachers, nurses, etc. The University of Lagos has established correspondence studies unit as far back as 1974.

Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) also established correspondence Teachers' Inservice Programme (TISEP) in 1976 which offers special programme to prepare middle level teachers for Nigeria's primary schools.

Establishment of Distance Learning Centres (DLC) is another innovation that has been of interest to teacher education in Nigeria. DLC was established by the University of Ibadan's Senate in 1988. It was initially referred to as the External Study Programme (ESP) but later became the Centre for External Studies (CES) and today it is called Distance Learning Centre (DLC). It was established to provide opportunities for teachers on the job to improve their skills and knowledge through on the job training.

Establishment of Teachers Registration Council (TRC) is yet another innovation in teacher education in Nigeria. The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established through Act No. 31 of 1993 (FRN, 2007). Registration of teachers is imperative in order to make teaching a profession. Teaching was bastardised especially as a result of introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) nation-wide in 1976.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) stated that teaching is a legally recognized profession in Nigeria. Thus, government set up the Teachers' Registration Council to control and regulate the practice of the profession. It also stated that those already engaged in teaching but not professionally qualified shall be given a period of time within which to qualify for registration or leave the profession.

Internship is another innovation in teacher education in Nigeria. The NPE provided that newly qualified teachers shall serve a period of internship: one (1) year for degree holders and two years for NCE holders (FRN, 2004). This is in line with the yardstick for measuring every profession. The Teachers Registration Council

of Nigeria (TRCN) is obliged to adopt internship as practiced by sister professions in Nigeria and overseas such as Pharmacists Council of Nigeria, Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria; Ontario College of Teachers, Canada; General Teaching Council of England, College of Teacher, London; Teacher Development Agency London, among others (FRN, 2008).

The establishment of University of Education is not only an innovation but an index of maturity of teacher education in Nigeria. One of these is the former Rivers State College of Education which has transformed to Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumolumeni Port-Harcourt. The dual mode of many Colleges of Education attaining degree awarding status in core education courses running concurrently with the NCE programmes is relatively new in teacher education in Nigeria. Nkoro and Ogirima (2014) listed up to 34 COEs that award degrees with their affiliate universities. Some of these COEs are: Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo; Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri; Federal College of Education, Kano, among others.

8. Critical Evaluation of the Reforms and Innovation

Generally, the objective of every innovation and reform is to improve or correct what is considered wrong or unsatisfactory. But some of the reforms sometimes, become counter-productive. This is why there is need to look at some of the reforms and innovation in teacher education in Nigeria critically in order to identify such lapses.

Looking at the Hussey reform of establishing two types of teacher training institutions, one would observe that the idea behind that was to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment. This is still relevant and consistent with the goals of teacher education as captured

in FRN (2004). But one may question the rationale behind phasing out Teacher Training Colleges (T.T.C.) that produced teachers specifically for the primary school level. The problem with the Hussey reform was that the teacher still served both as an educator and an evangelist. And so like the pupil-teacher, he was over-worked and underpaid.

The next reform was the establishment of Grade I teachers institutes which matured into Advanced Teachers Colleges, later renamed Colleges of Education (COEs). As captured by Ugadu and Odo (2012), anybody who intends to make career in teaching should rise through the cadres from Grade III teacher to Grade II teacher, Grade I teacher (which is NCE holder) and then Bachelors degree in Education and so on. But with the decision of the National Council on Education to make the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession, Teacher Training Colleges (T.T.Cs) were phased out. Students admitted into Colleges of Education have been made to jump from Grade III teachers to do Grade I teachers course at the Colleges of Education.

The NCE could still be made the minimum entry qualification for entry into the teaching profession without phasing out the Teacher Training Colleges. Teachers Grade Two Certificate (TC II) should have been made the basic qualification for admission into the College of Education which is a Grade I teachers College. The policy of making NCE the minimum qualification for entry into teaching profession in Nigeria might be considered an innovation but it created a lot of challenges in teacher education in Nigeria.

9. Ways to Reform Teacher Education

- **Spread the love:** As contemporary K-12 students change their learning styles and expectations for their educations, teachers need to change too. More specifically, the education that teachers receive needs to be modified to meet the modern needs of K – 12 classrooms. There are policy and practice changes taking place all over the world – many driven by teachers – that address the cultural shifts in the classroom. Young people that are interested in teaching high-demand subject areas like mathematics, bilingual education, physical science and special education should be viewed as more valuable to institutions of higher learning. This needs-based philosophy addresses actual voids in the industry and better equips schools to meet students' needs.
- **Target urban backgrounds:** Teachers with connections to urban locations and educations are prime candidates to return to these schools and make a difference. Universities are not doing enough to find these qualified future educators and then place them on specific tracks for career success at urban schools. There needs to be greater customization when it comes to college learning for future educators who understand firsthand the challenges that urban students face – and then job placement programs need to be built around the same concept.
- **Require urban student teaching:** All educators-in-training should spend at least a few hours in an urban classroom, in addition to their other teaching assignments. Seeing urban challenges firsthand must be part of every educator's path to a degree, even if he or she never teaches full time in such a classroom. I believe this would not only raise awareness of issues that tend to plague urban schools (like overcrowding and the impact of poverty on student performance) but may also inspire future teachers to want to teach in those settings. College programs must expose teacher-students to real-world urban settings in order to make progress past the social and academic issues that bring urban K-12 students down.
- **Reward urban teachers:** The test-heavy culture of American K-12 classrooms puts

urban teachers at a distinct advantage when it comes to resources and even lifelong salaries. If a teacher whose students score well on standardized tests is rewarded with more money and access to more learning materials, where does that leave the poor-performing educators? Instead of funneling more funds and learning help to teachers with student groups that are likely to do well, despite the teacher, urban teachers should be receiving the support. At the very least, the funding and attention should be evenly split. In almost every case, failing urban students and schools should never be blamed on the teacher. That mentality is what scares away many future educators who may otherwise have given urban teaching a try. There is too much pressure to perform and that leads to many urban teachers leaving their posts after the first year, or not even looking for those jobs in the first place.

- **Virtual learning options:** Though colleges often get all of the attention when it comes to online learning programs, K-12 education is also shifting more toward distance learning options. During the 2010-2011 school year, 1.8 million students in grades K-12 were enrolled in some type of distance learning program. That is up from just 50,000 in the 2000-2001 school year, according to the International Association for K-12 Online Learning. This is a trend that teachers-to-be simply cannot ignore. Virtual learning is not reserved for only those that can afford it; 40 U.S. states have state-run online programs and 30 of those states provide statewide, full-time K-12 schools. The University of Central Florida is one of the only schools to offer a virtual-school emphasis for education majors that lets students apprentice with Florida Virtual School instructors.
- **Continued classroom learning for administrators:** Since the people at the top are generally the decision-makers, they should be required to return to the field

every now and then. On the other hand, the teachers that are actually in the student trenches should be empowered to help change educational policy based on the reality of the modern classroom. The Center for Quality Teaching supports a “teacherpreneur” program that would “blur the lines... between those who teach... and those who lead.” Actionable strides toward closing the public education gap between teachers and administrators are necessary for real, effective change to take place in K-12 classrooms. Public education in America needs teachers that are better trained to meet the needs of specific student populations, those that understand the necessary role of distance learning, and those that are willing to speak up to facilitate classroom change. Without these teachers, effective reform to meet global demand is not possible.

10. Conclusion

Education is, indeed, a process of human enlightenment and empowerment. Globalization has changed the way most people live, work and study in the 21st century. For several years now, education leaders have pursued 21st century knowledge and skills initiatives. This is an exciting and challenging time for teacher educators. The nature of teaching is changing. In an effort to transform themselves into exemplary educator preparation institutions, many programs are becoming more enterprising, recognizing new opportunities and making changes required to respond to the needs of 21st century learners. Today, the nation that has a hold over knowledge is accepted as a nation with bright future. Teachers must realize their role and a great responsibility that has been entrusted in their hands in producing good citizens with great democratic values. Development of the knowledge based society is dependent on the creation of knowledge, on its spreading via education and on its dissemination via communication and on its involvement in technological innovation. So far

teacher education is concerned, NCTE has come out with a changed structure of various teacher education programmes with several new and innovative components. In order to create a world-class knowledge society, every one of us has to be knowledge worker and for this, secondary teacher education institutions can play an important role in conservation, preservation and extension of knowledge. So, there is a great need to make strong to teacher education for creating skilled and knowledge based work force in the 21st century.

11. Recommendations

Based on the negative implications identified through critical evaluation of some of the reforms and innovation in teacher education in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made:

1. Phasing out of Teacher Training Colleges (T.T.C) in Nigeria is considered inept as it has introduced structural imbalance in teacher education in Nigeria. It should therefore be reconsidered and restored.
2. Teacher education in Nigeria should be level specific as suggested by Ugadu and Odo (2012) as follows: Grade Two (TC II) (when restored) should handle primary 1-3; Grade one (I) (NCE) should handle primary 4-6; Bachelors Degree holders in Education should teach at the Secondary schools and T.T.C.; M.ED. should handle Colleges of Education and Polytechnics; Higher degrees (Ph.D and Professors) should handle the Universities and Postgraduate Schools.
3. Government at all levels should actually spend more money on education because it is an investment. Teachers at all level should be paid consolidated salaries and allowances to enable them put in their best and concentrate on the job.
4. Professionalization of teaching should be more vigorously pursued. Unqualified

teachers must not be allowed to practice, both in public and private schools.

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