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IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY IN
PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS
IN SOUTH-WESTERN NIGERIA
1976-2005

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Abstract

The issue of teacher quality has been a perennial issue that various Commissions or Committees on Nigerian Education has had to contend with. The purpose of this paper therefore is to examine various efforts that have been made to improve teacher education especially since the introduction of the UPE. The study a historical survey specifically highlights preparation made for the training of teachers, provisions of the National Policy on Education on teacher education, steps taken by southwestern states governments to enhance teacher education as well as the process for training teachers and how they affected teaching in primary schools. Concluding on the premise that the quality of teachers trained, and posted to schools may well determine who the next generation of Nigerians would be, the paper offered suggestion for improving teacher quality.

Word Counts: 133

Introduction

In spite of the acclaimed success of the 1955 free Primary Education Programme the report of both Banjo Commission (1960) and Taiwo Commission (1967) indicated that the programme was deficient. The Banjo Commission for instance indicated that the noticeable falling standards in primary schools were due among other factors to a preponderance of untrained teachers, lack of continuity in staffing, and teacher attitudes (Ola-Alani, 2012). The Taiwo report specifically emphasized the urgent need for the review of teacher training in

terms of higher entry standard, deeper curriculum content and modern teaching technique (Taiwo, 1980) as well as the improvement of the condition of service of teachers. With respect to teacher education low output of teachers from the training colleges and the poor quality of teachers produced were uppermost.

Although many of the teachers who were in the primary school system were dedicated, their own deficiencies in academic background and professional competence set a limit to their performance and the children's achievement. Also the exclusion of Grade I teachers from teaching in the primary schools contrary to the recommendation of the Ashby Commission was unfortunate, since those teachers were the more able and experienced ones who could have raised the standard of primary education (Taiwo, 1980). Due to the outbreak of civil war, no concrete steps could be taken to implement the recommendations of Taiwo Commission until the Federal Government Universal Primary Education Programme was introduced in 1976. The objective of this paper is to examine the various efforts that were made to ameliorate the issues affecting training and practice of teaching in the primary schools in Southwestern Nigeria between 1976 and 2005.

The following questions are raised in that connection:

1. What preparations were made for the training of teachers in Southwestern Nigeria before the 1976 UPE programme was introduced?
2. How did the provisions of National Policy on Education affect the training and retraining of teachers?
3. What concrete steps were taken by Government to enhance teacher education in the Southwestern status?
4. In what specific ways did the UBE programme enhance teacher training and re-training in the Southwest?
5. What were the challenges of teacher education and how did they affect teaching in the primary schools?

Prior to the launching of the Universal Education Scheme a crash programme was introduced in September 1974 for the training of the requisite additional teachers. The crash programme allowed for the admission of failed WASC candidates to do a two year Grade II teacher training while those who passed modern an 5.75 certificate holders did a year programme which qualified them for completion to teach as Grade II teachers (NPE 1981p.b6).

The crash programme clearly started the first in the training of teachers for the primary school system. It was such ill-trained, ill-equipped teachers that

were to serve as the cream of pioneer teachers for upon whose incompetence and inaptitude the laudable UPE programme of vible was cuilt.

As laudable as the array of courses appear to be: given the poor general academic background of the teacher trainees, and the fact that most of them would complete their professional training within a year or two, it could be inferred that the trainees could not have benefitted much from the training programme. At least not enough to care given them adequate mastery of the eight subjects they were expected to teach in the primary school.

The National Policy on Education

The National Policy on Education introduced in 1977 was revised in 1981. The National Policy affirmed that no education system could rise above the quality of its teacher. The policy therefore laid down guidelines for the training of teachers.

The purpose of teacher education according to the policy instrument (1981) were

1. to produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers.
2. to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
3. to help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national development.
4. to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country but in the wider world.
5. to enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

The General Studies component in the primary school teachers training programme covered Social Studies, Mathematics, Language, Science, Cultural and Creative arts, health and physical education and religious and moral education (NPE, 1981:68)

Teacher education curriculum consequently was also later improved to meet the trends in educational developments. Educational Technology components were amplified to provide primary school teachers with the flexible tools to effect healthy, intellectual emotional and physical development of the Nigerian children. (Fafunwa, 1991). It was also envisaged that primary school teachers would have good knowledge of the local language and the custom of the community if they were to ensure the qualities that had sustained the community. They should also know the methods of how to impart them so that their contribution would not be superficial (NPE 2004)

When the UPE was introduced in 1976, there were only seven teachers' colleges in Southwestern Nigeria. In order to meet the short fall in the number

of qualified teachers, additional teachers' colleges were established. By the 1980/81 school year, there were 33 teachers' colleges. They were subsequently expanded to accommodate more students. In 1982/83, two additional teachers' colleges were established in Oyo State to make a total of 35 in the zone, which was the highest number of teachers' colleges ever attained in the Southwest. (Ola-Alani, 2012)

There was equally, rapid increase in the number of colleges and students enrolment of advanced teachers colleges and colleges of education in the zone. By 1990, there were seven colleges of education. The establishment and expansion of the colleges of education were to train primary school teachers with higher qualifications. This was in line with the provisions of the National Policy of Education that stipulated that the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) was ultimately to become the minimum requirement for teaching in the primary schools.

Though the number of colleges of education increased the very process of their establishment and expansion were fraught with inherent deficiencies for the effective production of teachers. Quite a number of the colleges were substandard. Many were aptly described as glorified secondary schools. There was generally over enrolment of students in the colleges which in most cases were themselves not sufficiently equipped with basic infrastructure like lecture halls/theatres, workshops, libraries, staff of fices etc. Teaching-learning facilities like computers, audio-visual equipment, laboratories were grossly inadequate. The Colleges were equally inadequately staffed. A sizeable numbers of the lecturers themselves were not professionally qualified, since they had no training in education.

Initially there was the challenge of monitoring and evaluation, but the problem was resolved with the establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education. Degree No 3 of 1989 vested the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) with the powers to supervise the academic programmes of the colleges of Education, to monitor and regulate admission as well as accredit courses to be offered. Government also constituted The Teacher Registration Council (TRC) for the purpose of registering teachers, and to maintain quality teacher education in the country.

The increase in the number of teachers did not necessarily indicate that the quality of teachers and of teaching had improved. Adesina (1983), revealed that in 1980 in Oyo state for instance, out of the 28105 primary school teachers, 50.7% were below Grade II level qualifications, while 30%(8468) had no qualification at all. Government efforts at training teachers, however, resulted in steady progress. In the 1980/81 school year, for instance, the percentage of teachers that were qualified in the Southwestern states ranged between 40.6%

and 55.2%. The percentage of those without any professional qualification ranged between 18.7% and 38.7% (Fafunwa, 1991). The National Policy on Education stressed that NCE should be the minimum qualification for teaching in primary schools by 1995. Federal Ministry of Education statistics, however, showed that the percentage of primary school teachers in the states in Southwestern Nigeria who were holders of the NCE certificate and above in 1995 ranged between 21.0% in Osun State, and 35.0% in Ogun and Ondo State. 56.0% were holders of the Grade II Certificate. About 18.0% of the Grade II Certificate holders had additional Associate Certificate in Education (ACE) qualification. A little over 10.0% were not professionally qualified. They had no teaching qualification at all. The period when NCE as minimum qualification would be attained was consequently further extended from 1995 to 2000.

The introduction of the UBE brought tremendous improvement in the quality of teachers. According to Tahir, (2003) the UBE as an educational reform addressed the "gaps and distortions that existed in basic education level of the 1980s and 1990s" (p. 2). It brought about improved quality and people's greater commitment and support to the primary education sub-sector. Remarkable changes occurred in the primary school system and "changes were most visible among other factors in the training and retaining of teachers" (p. 50) especially in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table: Number of Teachers by Qualification, 1999-2005

Year	Ekiti						Ogun						Ondo					
	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total
1999	209	563	167	40	5	792	639	1051	461	150	9	175	38	742	295	125	0.1	120
2000	318	594	175	48	6	843	757	1123	445	147	8	181	48	772	305	131	0.1	125
2001	423	618	173	47	5	881	1012	1167	466	215	11	191	59	844	316	158	0.0	158
2002	517	663	195	54	6	965	1113	1145	465	176	9	190	63	804	329	185	0.1	148
2003	266	637	150	71	1	821	878	1049	291	359	2	153	48	889	360	818	0.0	138
2004	314	716	115	15	2	878	346	1017	346	50	0	143	48	889	360	818	0.0	138
2005	294	571	114	11	1	957	154	1076	231	267	0.0	210	48	889	368	818	0.0	165

Year	Osun						Oyo					
	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total	Grad.	NCE	GD II	Others	NQ %	Total
1999	321	1177 3	3042	72 8	0.4 6	1582	962	1912 9	647 9	177 6	6.2	2844 6
2000	427	1216 8	2468	71 2	0.0 5	1545 9	950	2043 3	326 2	193 8	6.5	2958 8
2001	581	1196 4	2172	93 8	0.0	1589 5	135 3	2142 0	586 6	215 9	7.0	3079 8
2002	697	1254 9	1132	94 8	0	1632 6	142 3	1976 9	571 7	215 7	7.4	2906 6
2003	50	3746	8575	-	0	1336 6	100 1	1083 1	357 9	19	0.1	1543 0
2004	61	8998	3200	-	0	1225 9	102 5	1057 3	354 3	15	0.0 9	1515 4
2005	20	1200 0	480	-	0	1654 0	145 7	2312 1	341 8	3	0.0 1	3137 7

Source: FME 2003, State Ministries of Education (2008) *nq – not qualified.

The Table above shows that in all the states with the exception of Ondo, the number of teachers without NCE certificates had largely reduced between 1999 and 2005. In

Ekiti the number declined from 2079 to 1256 whereas in Ondo it actually increased by almost 300 to 4506. The most noticeable improvement was in Osun, where there were only 480 in 2005 as compared with the 1999 figure of 3768. The figure from Oyo had been reduced to 3421 as against 8255 in 1999. Indeed, the percentage of unqualified teachers had dropped to between 0% and 11.0% across the states in Southwestern Nigeria. This is to say that almost over 90% of primary school teachers in Southwestern Nigeria were qualified.

A sizeable number of those without the minimum teaching qualification were grade II teachers, who were probably undergoing higher qualification pursuit through sandwich programmes. Most probably they were appointed from the National Teacher Institute programme to make up for the shortfall in teaching personnel. There was equally a small number of untrained teachers including school certificate or G.C.E ordinary level holders. It was unbelievable that 50 years after the introduction of UPE in the Southwestern Nigeria, primary schools in the area still had to do with teachers who had no professional training whatsoever. It was also noted that most of the university graduates teaching in primary schools were not necessarily classroom teachers. They were mostly head teachers who undertook largely supervisory and administrative positions, and whose qualifications, therefore, made very little direct impact on actual

classroom teaching. However, given the fact that they were experienced Gade II and NCE holders, their improved qualifications coupled with their experience, were certainly great asset and of utmost benefit to the primary school system. It also was a psychological boost for teachers, as well as socially satisfying or status enhancing, a move toward the experiences of countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

Other than satisfying basic required qualification, reports from classroom research, according to Aaron (2003), indicated that other specific improvements were needed for the training that teachers received. Deficiencies were identified in teachers' knowledge and skills in the area of language. They were also found to need more skills in teaching initial literacy, number, and basic science concepts in the children's mother tongue, more ability to manage children's learning needs during the transition to English as a medium of instruction, and more awareness of the importance of language across the curriculum. It was also suggested that they needed additional training in the use of instructional time, in promoting active training, in promoting active learning, in assessment techniques, and in teacher team work (ESSR, 2003).

A nation-wide survey of secondary school pupils conducted by the NCCE (2000) found that less than 8.0% expressed a wish to enter colleges of education in the selection examination for polytechnics and colleges of education held in 2001/2002 academic year, the 14,338 candidates who applied for admission to the NCE programmes represented only 22.5% of the intake capacity of the colleges of education. Consequently, colleges of education, especially those in Southwestern Nigeria, in particular, had to depend mainly on their pre-NCE programmes to fill NCE places. Maduabum (1991) however observed that It is only in education that failures are given official candidacy among those who are to be prepared for training programme. How do we ensure quality in a situation where people with passes all through are accommodated into the pre NCE programme?

Marons (2003) observed that a small and diminishing proportion of NCE students are specializing in primary education. They tended to prefer courses which would enable them to enter degree programmes or non-teaching careers after graduation. So far as teaching in the primary school was concerned the Nigerian Certificate of Education programme was defective. Primary school teachers are expected to teach all the school subjects in their various primary school classes; whereas their training only exposed them to only one or two subjects and these they would only teach effectively in upper junior secondary school classes. Introduction of Primary Education studies in the early 1990s was intended to make teachers competent in teaching their specialized courses at primary level, not to teach all subjects at their level.

Overall teacher quality at the primary level seemed to be low, and this was a reflection of the various part-time and sandwich programmes in which many were retrained. There were complaints that teachers produced by these programmes could barely write an assignment. The fact that, even with increased availability of upgrading opportunities for the NCE, most teachers were upgrading to Teacher Grade II (ESSR 2003) only showed the extent to which the level of teaching at the primary school level had sunk.

The art of teaching calls for a great deal of creativity. This need had been recognized even by the NPE 1981 which stipulated that teacher training should 'encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers' (p.64). According to Johnston, Halocha and Chater (2007) effective teachers must of necessity be creative. Creative teachers are those who:

- are able to provide original and creative activities;
- make a real impact on the children they teach;
- have good subject and pedagogical knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- have an infectious enthusiasm that motivates children,
- provide learning environments which meet children's individual needs;
- involve children as active participant in their own learning (p. 12)

Obanya (2004) noted that to train and retrain quality teachers particular attention must be paid to four things. These are: mode of selection, quality of education, professional development and morale of teachers.

Selection

Selection according to Obanya (2004), has to do with the decision as to who should teach and how they are chosen. In the attempt of the 1970s and 1980s to produce adequate number of teachers, many people who should have had nothing to do with teaching were recruited into the system. The same error was made by making admission into NCE and degree programmes in education available to "third and fourth options" students. Such candidates obviously cannot make success of the teaching career in terms of temperament, aptitude, ability to learn, nor to motivate others to learn (Obanya). Any person who wants to teach must, in the least, successfully complete senior secondary education. He further argued that there is need to develop appropriate teaching aptitude test to keep persons who cannot make good teachers away from teacher training programmes. He thinks that such useable instruments could be buried in some M.Ed and Ph.D. theses in some Faculties of Education in Nigeria.

Education

The training of teachers demand that they acquire adequate mastery of general education. For the primary school teacher, this implies sufficient exposure and competence in the core basic education courses. Obanya thinks that the first year of training could be devoted to general education. Professional courses could then be introduced gradually and incrementally (p.103) in subsequent years. Over the years the practice teaching exercise has not been well executed. Different models of the exercise has been practiced. It is necessary for trainers of teachers to evolve a system that adequately ensures that the professional education of teachers provides direct exposure to the world of work. To cater for adequate professional training, for instance, the Lagos State University School Attachment Programme which entailed various forms of guided school observations in the first two years of training for college of education and three years for degree programmes and one full semester of actual teaching in the final year. Whatever is learnt at the college lecture rooms would be critically examined by students in the real classroom situation. Experienced regular school teachers may also be given mentoring/ supervisory roles over the student teachers' in the course of their engagement with the schools.

Professional development

The National Policy on Education (2004) provides that: newly qualified teachers shall serve a period of internship of one year for degree holders and two years for NCE holders. This aspect of the policy has never been implemented. It is safe to observe then that unlike what the period of housemanship implies in the training of the doctors the process of training teachers is short-circuited or truncated willfully by both government and employers. This aspect of the policy should be effectively implemented

Further like what obtains in other professions, teachers should also have opportunities for continuous professional improvement programmes. Initial pre-occupational training of teachers is not sufficient. Continuous on the job training opportunities will help them to meet the demands of the changing trends in the curriculum as well as skills to meet the requirements of technological and scientific advancements. Also, teachers need be prepared to undertake leadership responsibilities. Thus, there is the need for some kind of training on being promoted to headship of a school. Third, the field of education, like all spheres of learning is not static. Teachers need to be constantly informed and engaged in discussing issues affecting their profession if they will continue to be effective and relevant. (Obanya, 2004)

Morale of teachers

Teachers' morale deserves more critical attention. The need for job satisfaction, good prospects of promotion, assured reasonable standard of living, enhanced social status and self-confidence is imperative if quality is to be maintained in the teaching profession.

Conclusion

The problem of teacher education could not be detached from the continuing low morale and status of teachers. Poor incentives to improve performance, poorly equipped working conditions, inadequate social recognition and lack of control over working condition in addition to late payment of salaries were still prevalent in Southwestern Nigeria. The task of improving teachers' welfare and commitment to their work ought to be sufficiently addressed. The significance of their service ought to be recognized, in terms of what had been observed that "the quality of teachers trained and posted to a school may well determine what the next generation of Nigeria would be" (Lassa, 2000).

Recommendations

1. Teacher education must be adequately funded.
2. Pre NCE programme should it be continued, must be extended to two years for candidates admitted with ordinary passes to enable them remedy their deficiencies in the school certificate subjects; while those with credit pass in English and or Mathematics could undergo the normal one year pre NCE programme.
3. Enhancing teacher quality and productivity by increasing opportunities for in-service training at local levels should receive government attention. In-service training ought to be ongoing, regular and woven into the fabric of the teachers' daily activities, which also addressing the expressed concern and needs of teachers.
4. Primary school teaching however needs to be made a more attractive career choice, especially for men, so that the trend of declining male enrolments is arrested and the drop out of male teachers decreased. School career advisers, principals and teachers need to actively promote teaching especially at the primary school level as a worthwhile and respectable career likely to hold encouraging promotion opportunities.
5. The curriculum of teacher training programme should be dynamic, keeping pace with changing times and changing roles of teachers. New methods of teaching in consonance with modern technological advancement becomes imperative.

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