

TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIFELONG EDUCATION

S. N. OSUJI*

Abstract

Teacher education, both pre- and in-service programmes, are offered in the country by different teacher education institutions as declared in the National Policy on Education. However, although commendable efforts have been made, yet much needs to be desired in the context of lifelong education. There should be parity between the regular full-time and the sandwich programmes in terms of entry qualification, course duration and course content, nor should the in-service programmes be commercialized. Teacher education offering requires all hands to be on deck including the governments, teacher education institutions and teachers associations. Innovations, such as, Mentoring, Peer In-Service, Peer-Tutoring, Subject Lead-Teachers and Cluster Lead-Teachers approaches should be adopted so as to afford continuing professional education opportunities to teachers.

Key Words: teacher education, lifelong education

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the need of a society at any point in time. It includes training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on-the-job). As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, both formal and non-formal sub-systems.

As the title indicates, our concern is with teacher education curriculum in Nigeria, a country that has since 1977 avowed to adopt lifelong education in her education principle and practice. The design for this paper is historical analysis so as to have a peep into the teacher education policy and practice. Thus, we have to, firstly, have a review of teacher education in the country. Secondly, we have to analyze the concept 'lifelong education' and its adoption in teacher education in Nigeria. Thirdly, we are to weigh the policy and practice vis-à-vis lifelong education. Finally, we have to give suggestions towards improving teacher education in the context of lifelong education.

Genesis of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher Education institutions started springing up in Nigeria since 1895 when the Hope-Waddel Training Institute was established in Calabar, followed by St. Andrew's College, Oyo, in 1896. The British Colonial administration became involved in teacher training in 1914 when it established one institution in Bonny. In the Northern part of Nigeria one was established in 1909 at Nasarawa and another in 1921 at Katsina. By 1925 fourteen institutions had been established in the country. Up to 1960 when Nigeria attained her independence many teacher training institutions had been established by the Christian missionary agencies

* Dr., Department of Continuing Education, Obafemi Awolowo University.

and few by the government to produce Elementary Teachers (Grade III) and Higher Elementary Certificate Teachers (Grade II). Also, there was Grade I Teachers Certificate which was obtained through one of two ways: A Grade II teacher who passed two Advanced Level General certificate of Education (GCE) subjects could apply for inspection in the two teaching subjects, if successful would be awarded the certificate. Secondly, a Grade II certificate holder could attend further training in one or two-year post Grade II College of Agriculture, success in which would earn one the award of the Teachers Grade One Certificate (Adesina, 2004:179).

Following the Ashby Report of 1960 which was set up for Post-School Certificate and Higher Education, Advanced Teacher Training Colleges (Now Colleges of Education) were established as from 1962 to produce well-qualified non-graduate teachers to teach lower classes in the secondary schools. When the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) started an experimental B.A and B.Sc degrees in Education in 1960, it attracted severe criticism. However, the UNN blazed a trail because at present there are about 53 Federal and State Universities having Faculties of Education, and 62 Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. In all these institutions, B.A./B.Sc degrees in Education are offered. Also, for graduate teachers who did not read Education, there is Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) through which such teachers are groomed to attain both academic and professional competence in Education.

There has been a controversy ranging between the proponents of the B.A/B.Sc Education and B.A./B.Sc plus PGDE as which is a more appropriate teacher education programme (Mkpa, 2002:11). Some institutions favour the B.A./B.Sc Education programme, which combines professional teacher education courses with the courses in a teaching subject simultaneously over a period of four years. But the proponents of the B.A./B.Sc plus PGDE options stress that the other option does not allow for an in-depth study of the teaching subject area. That is, in the bid to combine the two fields depth is compromised. The PGDE option, the proponents hold, allows for an in-depth study of the teaching subject over a period of four years after which one extra year is devoted entirely to professional education. However, the two options are being used in teacher education in the country.

Lifelong Education

The seventies featured the emergence of critics of the formal school system, such as Reimer (1971), Illich (1971), Freire (1972a & b), Dore (1976) and other members of Deschooling Movement, who called for reformation of education so as to afford an individual continuous and integrated development to grapple with the changing world and restore oneself as the author of his/her development and that of the society.

As if in response to these critics, UNESCO set up an International Commission on Education under the chairmanship of Edgar Faure, to review the World of Education. This Commission undertook a critical assessment of the educational situation up to 1972, and reached an all-round decision for the future progress of educational enterprise. Realizing the need for improvement on the existing system, and also for alternatives, the Commission stressed the fundamental idea of lifelong education and the learning society. In the words of the Commission:

Since studies can no longer constitute a definitive 'whole', handed out to and received by a student before he embarks on adult life, whatever the level of his intellectual equipment and the age at which he does so, educational systems must be thought out afresh, in their entirety, as must our very conception of them. If all that has to be learned must be continually re-invented and renewed, then teaching becomes education and more and more learning. If learning involves all of one's life, in the sense of both time-span and diversity, and all of society, including its social and economic as well as its educational resources, then we must go even further than the necessary overhaul of 'educational systems' until we reach the stage of a learning society.. (Faure, 1972).

This report laid the foundation for Third World Conference on Adult Education held in Tokyo (Japan) in 1972. At this Conference the concept of lifelong education was elaborately deliberated upon and

adopted as a guiding principle for education (Cropley and Dave, 1978). The Kernels of lifelong education are; there is need to continue learning throughout life; recognition of the formal, non-formal and informal sub-systems of education as making effective contributions towards the education of citizens in different settings; integration of educational sub-systems; democratization and diversification of provisions. Formal education refers to the organized institutionalized school, college and university with stereotyped curriculum as we usually have them under the ministry of education. The non-formal means all organized education activities outside of the school network, while informal refers to random experiential education that takes place unintended. Thus, the organized formal and non-formal should be made to interact with each other so as to endow an individual with the skill of lifelong learning which is a tool for attaining lifelong education.

It is true that citizens acquire education from different settings (formal, non-formal and informal), but the integration of the different settings is fraught with difficulty. To integrate two or three things or systems would mean fusion of the systems so that each will lose its identity or to make each retain its form while still having relationship with others. In either way, it is difficult to integrate sub-systems of education the curricula of which are unknown. For instance, the informal education is unorganized and therefore does not have any identifiable curriculum as to enable people know its content and coverage. The non-formal sub-system is organized as well as the formal. But the non-formal is offered by different bodies for different purposes using different methodologies. On the other hand, the formal sub-system usually has a well-stated curriculum, which forms the basis for its practice. To integrate two or three sub-systems requires working out equivalences so as to be able to say, for instance, that two-year undertaking in one sub-system is equivalent to one year in another system.

In Nigeria, when one graduates from a three-year National Certification of Education (NCE) course from a College of Education, the one enters a university to read Education degree for three years instead of four years. This means that the three-year programme of NCE is equivalent to the first year relevant programme of Education degree in a university. Also, after obtaining an Advanced Level Certificate in the General Certificate of Education (GCE), a candidate undergoes a three-year degree programme in a related discipline in a university. Thus, the integration principle of lifelong education could only be tenable where equivalences have been worked out between formal and non-formal sub-systems. But it is very difficult and therefore untenable between the unorganized informal sub-system and organized formal and non-formal sub-systems. The kernels 'democratization and diversification' are tenable as these involve providing for people according to their interests and needs. Thus, for teacher education, different interests and needs should be catered for.

The endorsement of lifelong education by UNESCO which Nigeria is a member formed the basis of the National Policy on Education (NPE), published in 1977, revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004. Hence it is declared that lifelong education will be the basis for the nation's education policies (NPE, 2004:10). In this Policy Teacher Education is assigned a chapter along with other segments.

Policy and Practice vis-à-vis Lifelong Education

In the Teacher Education Section the purpose is stated to include production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education system; production of teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment; and, to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. As a matter of fact, the essence of teacher education should be production of intellectually grounded and professionally committed teachers. It is very relevant that the policy realizes that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE, 2004:64).

However, the Policy contains the phrase 'teacher training'. It should be realized that 'training' means acquisition of narrow mechanical skills. The concept 'teacher education' should be preferred because it reflects production of educators who are academically and professionally well groomed to be able to translate theory of teaching into practice and vice-versa. Hence it is also stated that the curriculum is structured on the components of General Studies (basic academic subjects); Foundation Studies (Principles and Practice of

Education); studies related to the student teachers' subject of specialization or teaching subject and Teaching Practice.

Other relevant declarations include free in-service courses for up-grading untrained teachers which the NTI, Kaduna will have overall responsibility for; and that in-service training to be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education. National Certificate of Education (NCE) which is awarded after a 3-year college of education course has been declared to be the minimum qualification for teaching in the primary schools. Consequently, many Colleges of Education offer in-service courses towards up-grading grade II teachers to NCE for the primary schools. These courses are differently tagged sandwich or part-time programmes. The NTI has been alive to its responsibility over part-time or sandwich programmes. Its distance education programmes make use of the print (written text) and the electronic media (radio, television and video tapes) towards successful offering of in-service teacher education in the country (Aghenta, 1992:191). However, there is doubt over the successful use of the electronic media in the face of constant power failure all over the country.

Teacher education, both pre-and in-service programmes are being offered in the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics with different tags, such as, distance education, sandwich and part-time. Even the interest of the country over knowledge and skills of teachers could be seen through the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (1993), duty of which includes:

determining what standards of knowledge and skill are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers...and raising those standards from time to time as circumstances may permit: classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.

However, although commendable efforts are being made on teacher education in the country, both pre-and in-service, yet there are many problems. Osuji (1995), Fabinu (2004:186) and Adesina (204:183), decry the non-cooperation of the governments (Federal and States) with teachers undergoing in-service courses. Aghenta (1992:196-197) and Mkpa (2000:111) identify the shortcomings in the sandwich B.A./B.Sc Education programmes versus the full-time programmes to include, entry qualification, course duration, reduction in the scope of course content, commercialization of examination grades, constraints of expensive handouts which must be bought by students. Based on the shortcomings of the sandwich programmes, for instance in the B.A/B.Sc Education degree, Aghenta (1992:198) suggests that a body should be set up to streamline and harmonize them with full-time programmes; each university senate should take a critical look at the sandwich programmes and tighten up the entry requirements, lengthen the periods for completing the courses and enrich the course content to ensure parity between the full-time and sandwich programmes. Hence the NTI model should be emulated.

Lifelong Teacher Education Model

The features of lifelong education include vertical integration meaning education throughout life. Thus, the objectives of teacher education should include cultivating in the teachers the attitude of continuous learning. In-service programmes in the forms of seminars, workshops and conferences should be seen as a priority so as to offer teachers opportunities to refresh their knowledge and skills after the initial pre-service education. Fadina (2004:303) suggests that more on-the-job and in-service training should be provided to raise the standard of teachers in Nigeria. Olude (2004:226) sees in-service training as a veritable means of keeping teachers in Nigeria up-to-date in their areas, and as a lifelong education process for improvement of the teachers and the educational system.

Teachers' attendance to in-service programmes should be seen as a necessity while governments (Federal and States) should see it as their responsibility to support teachers financially and morally. The part-time programmes should be run free of charge as stated in the NPE nor should hand-outs be sold. Aghenta (1992:196-197) and Mkpa (2000:119) suggest parity between regular full-time programmes and the in-

service/part-time/sandwich programmes in terms of entry qualifications, course duration and content. Mkpa (2000:120) strongly recommends adoption of the sandwich/NTI programmes, devoid of any form of bastardization and commercialization.

Mkpa (2000:120) suggests innovations in the in-service programmes in Nigeria to include:

- I. **Mentoring:** This is strategy in which highly experienced teachers in a school are assigned a number of less-experienced ones to serve as their mentors or professional guides. This is like the Peer In-Service Approach (PISA) which is a self-help in-service approach that drastically reduces the cost of financing training programmes for teachers within local government areas. Thus, the expertise of good/experienced teachers is utilized to up-date other teachers in neighbouring schools in the same area (UNESCO, 1997:30-31).
- II. **Peer-Tutoring:** A colleague approaches the other to obtain or seek professional assistance or guide on any aspect of his/her discipline where he/she is defective. In this way, the area of professional competence of each colleague benefits the other eventually leading to each member of staff growing academically and professionally.
- III. **Subject Lead-Teacher Approach:** A Senior Teacher of the same subject leads the other teachers, overseeing all curricular programmes associated with that subject.
- IV. **Cluster Lead-Teachers Approach:** Teachers in selected schools in a Local Government Area (five or less schools) come together to share experiences in certain subjects. A very good teacher in a particular subject leads the others. This cluster enhances mutual assistance among themselves, hence self improvement without necessarily going to any training institution.

In addition to these strategies, the different subject-teacher and discipline associations' conferences, workshops, and seminars should be encouraged on local government, state and national bases. Usually, at these gatherings experts are invited to give talks after which the topics are elaborately discussed by all members.

The next characteristic is horizontal integration, which means linking education and life. Teachers and student teachers should be made aware that much education takes place in the society outside the formal sub-system. This awareness will enable teachers integrate or link up the school education with that of the out-of-school. This integration involves bringing the society into the school and also bringing the school into the society. For instance, relevant resources in the society should be brought into the school to bring more reality and boost classroom teaching. Workshops, arts galleries, agricultural establishments and industrial set-ups in the society should be used to interact with the formal school teaching. Students' practical teaching exercises should not be restricted to the formal classrooms, but should be extended to the out-of-school settings. Thus, the teachers will link school education with life in the broader society.

The third characteristic is pre-requisites for learning. This refers to having the disposition to continuing to learn or learning-how-to learn so as to enable one to be an autonomous learner. Aghenta (1992:198) recommends the NTI model of distance education with the students reporting to their teachers every weekend. Emphasis should be placed on the use of the library and news media (print and electronic) to acquire knowledge. Continuous assessment and self-assessment should be stressed so as to enable students monitor their achievements while undertaking independent educational pursuits. Thus, lifelong learning becomes a tool for lifelong education.

Conclusion

Teacher education requires special consideration in any deliberation on education because no organized education can rise above the quality of its teachers. Consequently, among the purpose of teacher education in the National Policy on Education is to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment. As it is declared in the NPE that lifelong education will be the basis of education policy and practice in Nigeria, the most effective way to achieve this intention is through teacher education. In the country, regular full-time and in-service/sandwich programmes are offered. Much effort has been made in

these programmes. But there is need to streamline and harmonize the full-time and the part-time/sandwich programmes so as to ensure parity in entry qualification requirements, course content and course duration. In addition, governments, teacher education institutions and teachers' professional associations should join hands in teacher education so as to afford opportunities to teachers to constantly up-date their knowledge and skills through different innovative approaches.

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