

PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHING THROUGH FUNCTIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper specifically focuses on professionalization of teaching profession through functional Teacher Education in Nigeria. The first part of the paper examines the concept of teaching, professionalization and functional Teacher education in Nigeria. The second aspect examines the strategies for professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. The third aspect focuses on the problems of professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. The paper is concluded with the implication of professionalization of teaching through functional teacher education.

Keywords: Professionalization, teaching, teacher and teacher education

Introduction

Teaching is a noble and respectable profession in the developed countries of the world, It is often described as the mother of all professions such as law, engineering, pharmacy, nursing, medicine and so on sine all these are products of teaching profession. Of all the problems facing teaching profession in the recent times in the developing world, Nigeria inclusive, none is as persistent as the one relating to the problem of professionalization of the profession. This is manifested in public lectures, workshops and conferences on teacher education. It is of great concern that teaching in Nigeria has not really assumed professional status like other professions such as legal, medical and other allied. It appears that teaching profession in Nigeria has been regarded as a dumping ground for people who desire to have a temporary job while they seek other jobs of their dreams.

Teaching in Nigeria has been patronized by the people who could not succeed in their chosen vocations and the people who believe that teaching is a “spare time job” that allows them to simultaneously engage in other profit making businesses which they considered more lucrative than teaching. In the olden days, teachers were given due honour and respect in various society in Nigeria. Today, they are being looked down upon as people who could not find anything better for themselves in their society.

The belief that teaching should be professionalized in Nigeria has been recognized, appraised, echoed and re-echoed as a collective desire in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) where it is clearly stated that teaching, like other professions, will be recognized as a profession. The Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established by Act No 31 of 1993 to regulate and control the teaching profession. The National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) asserts that no education system can grow beyond the quality of its teachers. According to the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004) the goals of teacher education shall be the following:

- (a) Production of highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education system.
- (b) Encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (c) Helping teacher fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (d) Providing teachers with the intellectual and profession background adequate for their assignment and to have them adaptable to changing conditions and
- (e) Enhancing teachers’ commitment to the teaching profession.

Teacher education in Nigeria may either be pre-service or in-service training. Pre-service teacher education is the teacher education given to people to make them qualified to teach at any level of education after their training programme. Pre-service teacher education is provided by Universities’ Faculties of Education, School of Education and Colleges of Education.

Service teacher education is the teacher training programmes given to people that are not professionally qualified to teach in the schools. The in-service teacher education is provided by University Institutes of Education, Sandwich programme in the Universities and Colleges of Education and the National Teachers’ Institute. They mount programmes of teacher education in form of postgraduate Diploma in Education, Sandwich and part-time degree in Education for serving teachers and various skill improvement workshops. It is against this background that this paper examines professionalization of teaching through functional teacher education programme in Nigeria.

Adesina (2005) pointed out that the history of teacher education in Nigeria dates back to the late 18th Century during the early Christian missionary era. At that time teacher was in fact the church catchiest chosen and trained by the priest. Teacher education of the formal type started about 1896 with the establishment of St. Andrew's College of Education, Oyo. It was specifically established to train teachers for the service of the church missionary society. This early form of teacher education focused mainly on production of teachers who operated at the primary level of education. However, before independence, there were very few secondary schools, the bulk of teachers at these schools were expatriates and missionaries most of whom had no teacher education.

What is a Profession?

A profession is an occupation or vocation that requires special skills, knowledge of some department of learning and qualification to especially one with high social status. It is a job that requires special skills or knowledge through special training with a high level of education; it is a job that utilizes functional education and mental ability rather than manual or physical labour. According to Dada and Fadokun (2010), profession entails an occupation that is dependent upon specialized intellectual study and training for the provision of skilled service to other member of society; government, non governmental agencies for a definite fee or salary. Pratte and Rury (1991) argued that a profession is an occupation with enviable remuneration and high social status.

According to Oyekan (2000), a profession is an occupation whose basic responsibility public status and expertise are continually strengthened by specialized education and training within a specific period of time. It is a body of experts that provides a special service and exemplary leadership of harmonious survival of their community based on their accumulated knowledge skills and wisdom. To this end, a profession is an occupation whose basic responsibility, public status and expertise are continually strengthened by specified education and training with specific period of time. A professional teacher is therefore one that can perform his or her role according to the characteristics of this set of power relationships of controlling the classroom agenda and discourse, keeping control in the classroom and wider school; enforcing roles made without student consent, carrying out punishment, enforcing attendance at school implementing the curriculum as designed by a government and ensuring uniform and uniformity in appearance of the students.

The Professional Teacher

A professional teacher, according to Koleoso (2000), is a person who has the registrable professional qualification which enables him to be appointed to teach in any recognized educational institution in Nigeria and who is physically fit, of sound mind and mentally alert. Adeboyeje and Afolabi (1991) described a professional teacher as a professionally trained person who moulds the idea, habit and attitudes of the learners with a view to bring forth people who are physically strong, mentally alert, emotionally stable, culturally sound and socially efficient. Mishra (2008) opined that a professional teacher is a living model for the young learners who are under his control and he is nurturing them and makes them grow and develop fully so as to make them useful person for the society and the development of the nation.

However, a professional teacher occupies a unique position in an educational institution. He is an educational leader who exercises a pervasive influence on the classroom. A professional teacher has multifarious roles to perform in the classroom and educational institution. He functions as a disciplinarian, manager, motivator, administrator, adviser, problem-solver, classroom doctor, guidance and counsellor to mention a few. Moreover, apart from the fact that a professional teacher has some embodiment of ethical values associated with the profession such as modesty, honesty, loyalty, dynamism and excellence; a professional teacher should also possess a number of attributes such as sincerity, humility, industrious, discipline, being empathic and sympathetic.

The Concept of Professionalization

Professionalization is a process by which a vocation, job or an occupation transformed itself into profession of high standard, integrity and competence. Kelly (1995) observed that professionalization is a sociological process by which an occupation gains professional status and privilege. According to Adesina (2005), professionalization refers to building into teaching career some control device to ensure that the practitioners are worthy members of the profession. Igwe (1992) defined professionalization as the process where an occupation increasingly meets the criteria or qualities attributed to a profession. It also means improvement in the status of the occupation and its actual practice. In his own opinion, Oyekan (2000), defined professionalization as a process involving improvement in the status and practice of the occupation as the practitioner continually upgrades the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective and efficient professional practice. Professionalization involves a number of steps and is determined by society which entails societal influence and authority over an occupational group or trade. Then, professionalization can be described as

the process of assigning certain qualifying characteristics to an occupation or a member of an occupational category. Thus, any member of an occupation who is regarded as a professional is seen as a competent actor in that occupation. Professionalization thus implies that the status and the practice of an occupation has to improve as a result of the improvement or upgrading of knowledge of the practitioners. To this end professionalization of teaching means improvement of skills, knowledge, attitudes and ethical orientations which a teacher needs for good conduct and practice. The term 'Profession' as defined by Carr Saunders cited by Mishra (2008) is an occupation based upon specialized intellectual study and having the purpose of which is to supply skilled service or advice to others for definite fee or salary. Also Gordon, et al (1983) defined a profession as an especially desirable and dignified occupation with an implication of intellectual training and mental expertise are involved. Teaching profession, according to Amache (2005), involves greater social responsibilities, great sense of value and long period of preparation, regulated scheme of payment, reward for service rendered, as well as great reward for the interest of occupation. There are many characteristics which are identified as the criteria for judging profession and they vary from one scholar to the other. Anith (1988) recognized seven, Nwachi (1991) came out with a summary of six, Musgrave (1975) identified seven, Richey (1979) listed eight criteria as crucial features of any profession while Oyeneyin (1994) identified six conditions which an occupation must fulfil to qualify as a profession. Those conditions include:

- (a) **Training:** This condition is in regard of the length of time and specialization or differentiation of the training programme.
- (b) **Expertise:** The technical know-how, experience and modus-operandi in an occupation.
- (c) **Commitment:** Altruism is regarded as the hallmark of true professional practice. Therefore, a professional practitioner is more service-oriented than profit-oriented in carrying out his functions.
- (d) **Responsibility:** In every profession, there must be identifiable laid down codes of ethics that is binding on the practitioners. Such code of conduct will be clear on the standard of practice, compartment and the privileges of membership.
- (e) **Autonomy:** There must be an official recognition of the professional status of the occupation through legislation.
- (f) **Corporateness:** members of a professional body must be identifiable with some special and peculiar characteristics. Ironically, teaching profession in Nigeria does not meet most of the identified basic characteristics of a profession. Consequently,

it lacks the esteem that a profession ought to offer its members. It has been painfully hijacked by all comers who perceive teaching as a dumping ground.

Problem of Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria:

In the struggle of teaching for full professional status in Nigeria, there are many hindrances to the realization of the well orchestrated professionalism. One of these is the difficulty in disengaging the unqualified, the quacks and the charlatans from teaching in Nigeria. Ironically, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), indirectly encourages the practice of teaching by quacks by admitting them into its membership and collecting dues from them.

Another hindrance to professionalization of teaching is the low professional status in Nigeria. This can be attributed to the erroneous belief of many Nigerian that anyone can teach and that teaching is meant for those who are already failures in their life endeavours or those who have nothing better to do.

Non-involvement of teachers in decision-making process in vital educational matters related to their jobs constitutes a serious constraint to professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. Teachers have been denied the opportunities to participate in education planning, educational policy formulation, staff recruitment into schools, student placement exercise, procurement and selection of instructional resources, supervision of education projects and so on.

The State control of staff personnel services for teachers has been militating against professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. Hitherto, the training, recruitment, selection, remuneration, conditions of service and the number to be employed at any given time and place and qualifications of teachers, discipline and deployment of teachers are been controlled by the state. It is no gainsaying that the survival of teaching depends greatly on the professional unity among its practitioners.

The fragmentation of teachers into many different associations constitutes a serious constraint to professionalization of teaching in Nigeria. There has been division of teachers into various associations representing different interest groups. Consequently, teaching profession can no longer come out with one voice. In Nigeria today, there are the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Conference of Primary School Head-Teachers, the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), Committee of Provosts of Colleges of Education, Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Association of Classroom Teacher, Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) Social Studies Teachers Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) and other teacher organizations.

Commenting on this constraint, Igwe (1992) said that arising from this problem of over fragmentation; teaching lacks effective and united organization in the face of an increasingly powerful and monopolistic modern state. Teachers have been receiving unattractive and very humiliating remuneration from government unlike other practitioners like medical doctors, nurses, accountants, estate agents, lawyers, architects, surveyors and so on. This shows that the service rendered by teachers is not as much as valued as those of other professionals. The control of teacher education programme including examination is vested in the institutions running teacher education programmes. There is no established central body to regulate the conduct of its examinations as it is in other fields like nursing, law, pharmacy; architecture, theology, engineering and accountancy. The National Policy on Education stipulating that the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria should be NCE is yet to be fully implemented. This has been a serious constraint to professionalization of teaching in Nigeria.

The Nigerian Union Teachers (NUT) appears like a toothless bulldog. It is a trade union body that is not organized and vibrant as the associations of other professions like Medical Council of Nigeria, Council of Registered Engineers in Nigeria (COREN) and Legal Council of Nigeria. The weakness of NUT is apparent in its inability to take a firm stand on issues like unified salary structure, National Negotiating Council for Teachers Welfare. All these issues negate teachers' claim to professionalism. It has been an onerous task for the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) to enforce the professional code of Ethics on teachers because of the indifferent attitude of members. Consequently, the efforts of the union to professionalise teaching in Nigeria could not be effectively accomplished

Strategies Towards Full Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria

To effectively complete the process of professionalizing teaching in Nigeria, some strategies have to be adopted by the Government, Teachers Organizations and the teachers themselves should take a number of steps.

(i) Government Strategies of full Professionalism

The government must ensure immediate commencement of work by the recently established Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria. As the National Teachers Registration Council has been established through the enactment of Act No 31 of 1993, this national body should be assisted by the State Teachers' Registration Council in every State of the Federation, to be charged with the responsibility of teachers' registration, accreditation, certification, promotion, development, discipline and making regulations to control the practice of teaching as a profession.

The government should make provision for the professional growth of the teachers through periodic in-service education and this should be sponsored by the government. The teaching profession is such that requires a teacher to continue to improve and increase knowledge in his subject throughout his lifetime. The government should introduce unified service conditions for all categories of teachers throughout the country. This includes a unified salary such as the much agitated Teachers Salary Structure (TSS), specially designed for teachers to enhance their remuneration and welfare package. Provision should be made for enhanced opportunities for advancement and other fringe benefits in teachers' career structure. Career opportunity and progression for teachers would undoubtedly make teaching more attractive, rewarding and satisfactory. The minimum teaching qualification of NCE should be enforced by the Government.

The government should categorize teachers into three distinct groups as suggested by Igwe (1992). These categories are:

- (a) The full professional teachers to be made up of all graduates with teaching qualifications not lower than the NCE, Post-Graduate Diploma in Education or a Bachelor's degree in education.
- (b) Intermediate professional teachers to be made up of all NCE holders; holders of Grade I and II Teacher's certificate.
- (c) Auxiliary teachers to be made up of all graduates without teaching qualification and non-graduates without teaching qualification.

Government should make concerted efforts towards modernizing teacher education programme. Computer science, instructional technology, classroom management, media and other communications courses should feature prominently in the teacher education programme to enhance capacity building and identification, improvisation and utilization of resources for effective teaching and learning in the classrooms. Like other professions such as medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy and accountancy that are highly valued in Nigeria, it becomes highly imperative to review the duration of the teaching practice exercise from a minimum of 12 weeks to 12 months. This will enhance professional development and proper orientation and adjustment of the teachers to school setting.

However, the teacher education programme should be more effective and efficient for the trainees. They (trainees) should undergo a professional training in the colleges of education, university and other teacher education programmes.

(ii) Strategies by Teachers' Organization for full Professionalism

The teachers' organizations must be fully represented and actively involved and must work relentlessly to safeguard the autonomy inherent in

the status of teaching as profession. They must strictly enforce members' compliance with professional codes of ethics. The nature, contents and activities clearly spelt out in their constitutions must be professional in all ramifications. The teachers' organizations must inspire their members to develop and maintain professional culture and refrain from unethical values. They should work cooperatively with the government in the provision of staff development programmes such as in-service education, on-the-job training schemes, workshops, seminars, conferences and vacation programmes for teachers. The organisation should also restrict the entry and exit of members. To this end, the organisation should make sure that anybody that has not undergone proper training should not be allowed into the job.

Implications For National Development

Teaching is a noble profession. No society can advance and excel without an effective and virile teaching profession. Teaching is widely accepted as a public service that requires of teachers expert knowledge and specialized skills, acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study and demands for a sense of personal and corporate responsibility for the education and welfare of the learners under their custody. Thus, teachers are potential liberators of humanity from conservatism, ignorance, fear, misunderstanding, conflicts, wars and famine and contribute significantly to national development.

Buttressing the role of teachers in national development, Aggarwal (1981) said that, the destiny of a nation is shaped in its classroom and it is he teacher who is very important instrument in moulding that destiny. Fafunwa (1972) affirmed that, the services of the teachers are to a nation, for they, more than any other professional group influence the lives of the Nigerian youths and therefore the nation's future. Contributing to the indispensable role of teachers in national development, Oyekan (2000) declared that, industrial harmony, peace and progress will be elusive in the schools and the nation unless the teachers, are fully integrated into the social, economic and political framework of the society with proportionate benefits for their multilateral contributions to nation building. The teacher education programme should be given priority and such programme should be the one that will give professionalization to teaching profession. The ethic and code of conduct should be part of teacher programme, in order to acquaint the trainees with these codes of conducts.

As teachers contribute significantly to the development of the nation, professionalization of teaching should be accorded high priority in Nigeria today. Figure 1 clearly depicts a model of professionalization of teaching for national development. As indicated in figure 1, professionalization of

teaching in Nigeria could be effectively accomplished through the collaborative efforts of the government, Teachers’ organizations, functional teacher education programme and individual teachers, in bringing forth well motivated professional teachers for all levels of education in Nigeria. Since higher status, improved remunerative scheme and public recognition are the ultimate implications of the teaching profession that has dully registered members as a result of professionalization, the highly inspired professional teachers will strive hard to develop high quality manpower that is basic to national development. A nation that aims at achieving a buoyant and efficient economy and accelerated national development must improve the quality of the labour force through functional teacher education programme and the efforts of well motivated professional teachers at all level of education. Thus, the high quality manpower developed through education, would undoubtedly utilize the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudinal values to attain and sustain economic efficiency, political consciousness.

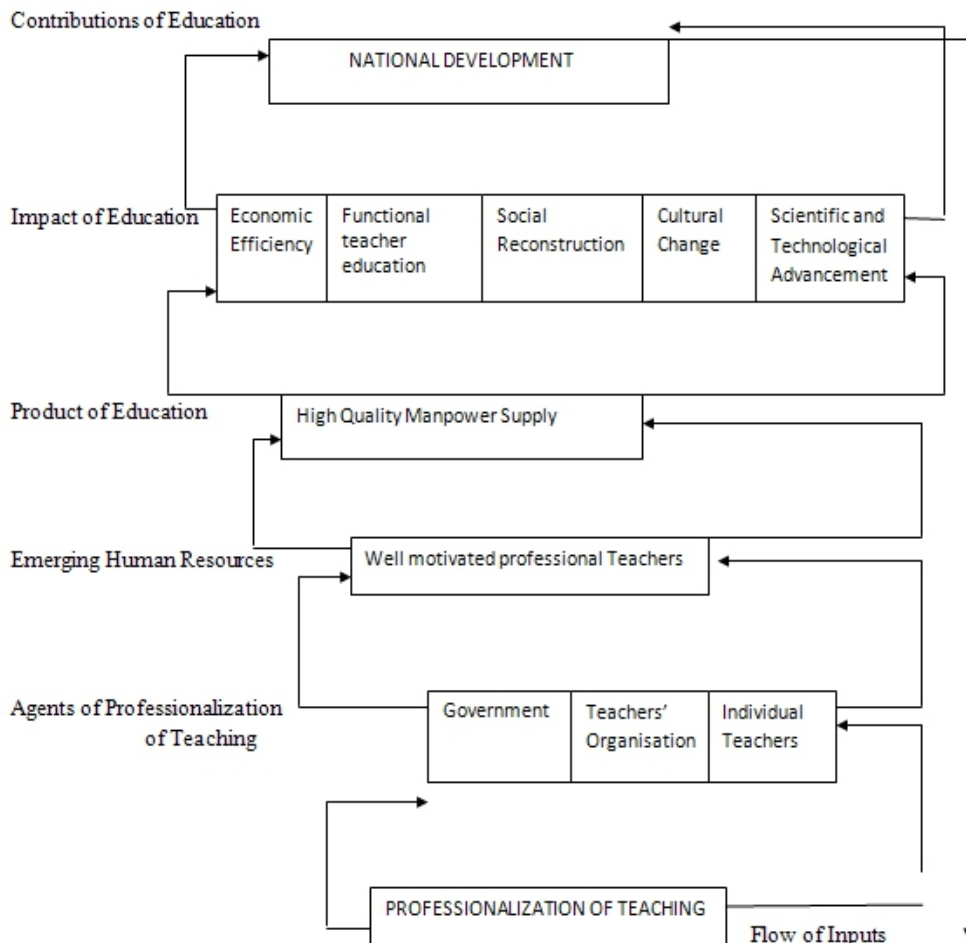


Figure 1: A Model of Professional of Teaching for National Development

Conclusion

If teaching is to be really professionalized, it must not only become a full time job for all professional teachers, the conditions of service must be attractive and opportunities must be provided for the professional growth of the teachers, and functional teacher education programme must be put in place. Teachers should always keep fit in the teaching profession by attending conferences, seminars, workshops and exhibitions which relate to his area of interest or subject. Such staff development programme would enable a teacher to be abreast of the latest development in the teaching profession. Such development may include important information about teaching techniques, instructional materials and equipment, psychology, curriculum and classroom management.

Since professionalization of teaching ensures adequate professionalism, effective teaching and creative manpower resources for sustainable development of the nation, it therefore implies that teacher education programme and educational institutions should be staffed continuously with properly trained, well qualified, highly satisfied and competent teachers to teach the trainees. There is a great need to put teachers on the same footing with other highly valued professionals in Nigeria and make teaching profession more attractive like other professions. The government should look into the problem of general dissatisfaction with the teaching profession such as poor teacher education programme, poor salaries and allowances, poor public image of the profession and the desire of most teachers to enter another type of work with attractive remunerations. Until teachers are made to feel that they are counted upon, through improved service conditions, more desirable living conditions, better educational facilities that contribute to instructional efficiency and opportunities for higher earnings, the job efficiency would be poor, hence the status of professionalism would be difficult to attain for teaching.

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