

Technical College Teachers in Nigeria: Issues, Problems and Challenges

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Abstract *This paper is centered on the problems and prospects of the technical college teacher in Nigeria it explicates the relevance of technical education programme. The paper recognizes the implications of the National Policy on Education (NPE) for technical (technological) education, the new curriculum development by the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the changing business and technology environment, the personal, professional and public image of the technical teachers. The teachers of technology have certain peculiarities which must be taken care of before they can effectively carry out their professional roles. The paper craves the indulgence of federal and state governments as well as private organizations to support the technical programmes at all levels of educational system, that is, the aspect of funding, provision of infrastructure, training materials, motivation, in-service training and knowledge update among other things.*

Introduction

Technical education programme in Nigeria evolved in response to technological and industrial needs of the people. It has received the backing of the National Policy on Education (NPE 1977 revised in 1981). The fields of science, Technology and Engineering have got much to offer in the area of economic development and provision of modern conveniences to mankind. This is why governments, institutions and managements emphasize the need for practically oriented technical education curriculum and the need also to provide effective teaching of technical subjects in Nigerian colleges (Nkweke 2007).

For anybody to assume the duty of serving as a technical teacher, such a person is expected to possess the needed competencies for imparting technical knowledge and skills, especially now that the emphasis is on competency-based learning (Davies 2001). Today, efforts are geared towards retrieving Nigeria from the shackles of technological dependence. This is why the Nigerian youths are encouraged to be creative and inventive oriented through participation in introductory technology, technical education and engineering studies (Wokocha 1985).

Technical teachers have to provide quality technological training that keeps pace with quality control in technology education. This means that the technical teachers have to plan their lessons based on good instructional objectives as well as see the learners through practically. Furthermore, the benefits of technology cannot be over-emphasized. Whereas science produces knowledge, technology produces gadgets. Technology applies scientific knowledge in providing solutions to practical problems that plague and puzzle mankind. Technology is the capacity to ensure that human needs are supplied through the utilization of tools and machinery. In other words, mankind put in labour so as to come out with inventions and discoveries to satisfy his needs. This explains why people undertake farming work to obtain food, build houses to obtain shelter, weave and produce clothes to wear against adverse weather-conditions. Mankind also works to discover electricity, pipe-borne water, and many other modern conveniences (Nathaniel 2002). Despite this usefulness of technical education, vocational and technical education in Nigeria are bedeviled with certain constraints (Aghenta 1985). Technical education contends with training that borders on acquisition of knowledge and skills in woodworks, metalwork, electrical/electronics, welding and fabrication, building, auto-mechanics etc including workshop organization and management. There are five technical institutions in Nigeria outside the universities namely- pre-vocational and vocational schools at post primary level: the technical colleges, the polytechnics and the colleges of education (technical) at the post secondary level established to provide a base for technological take off of this country, which according to Ekpenyong

(1995) are being crippled by lack of funds and inadequate infrastructures. There is doubt also if the technical college teachers are adequately motivate to do their Jobs as facilitators of knowledge

Concept of Technical Education

What is called "Technology Education" was formerly restricted to technical education which according to Aina (1994) meant skill training in crafts and in certain trades such as building, auto mechanics and woodwork. Now the major fabric of technology education Involves training In the process of applying both science and technical education to practical problems right from primary to tertiary level of education This is because it aims at developing practical skills as well as the creative and Innovative abilities and facilitates decision making skills and problem solving abilities. The two terms technical and technology education are often used Interchangeably as they are In many parts of this paper.

Its aim is to train students in the application of science knowledge to the solution of practical problems facing society, not merely to train them In manual and technical education IS taken to mean technology education In addition, technical education within the content of craftsmanship is seen by many as education for self reliance, which leads to national development It is the education which provides the persons that has received it with self employment thereby contributing to the society in which he/she lives It is for this reason that authors like Toby (1997), Sofolahan (1989), Fafunwa (1991) attributed under-development to low level of technology which marks the socio-cultural difference between developed and developing worlds.

Technical/technology education IS a major component of vocational education The Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council NERDC (1998) stated that vocational education is that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges This is equivalent to senior secondary education but designed to Prepare individual to acquire practical skill, basic and scientific knowledge and attitude required as craftsmen and technicians and sub-professional level. The technical college teacher according to Ekpenyong (1995) must be versatile in their areas and in the general and science education courses.

Objectives of Vocational and Technical Education

The goals of vocational education according to Nigeria educational research and development council NERDC (1998) shall be to:

- a) Provide the trained manpower in the applied sciences and business particularly at craft, advanced and technical levels
- b) Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development.
- c) Give the necessary training and impart skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant

In pursuance of the above goals, the main features of the curricular activities for technical colleges shall be structured in foundation and trade modules. The curricular for each trade shall consist of four components namely: General Education: Theory and related courses; workshop practice, industrial training and small business management and entrepreneurial training.

Problems of the Technical College Teacher

The problems of the technical college teacher are many and they arise from: inadequate supply of instructional materials; lack of adequate motivation, poor professional, personal and public Image; lack of well equipped library for research workshop; frequent curriculum changes, lack of well articulated In-service education programme for technical teachers, insufficient university admission for training of technical

teachers etc. However, not all the problems will be examined because of limited space and time. Nevertheless some of the problems are :

1. Inadequate Supply of Technical Workshop. Most technical colleges cannot boast of adequate functional workshops even when the teachers may be ready to teach the students, in spite of poor remuneration. There are some cases where technical equipment were supplied but no workshop to install the equipment. This certainly led to frustration on the part of the technical college teachers.

2. Inadequate Supply of Instructional Materials. Instructional materials and consumables in technical colleges are very expensive and the federal and state governments have not been providing funds to address this critical area. All we are getting is just lip service to technical education. Even when the teachers are ready to improvise instructional materials, the little amount of fund needed could still not be received from the college authorities.

3. Lack of Adequate Motivation Technical college teachers are subjected to deplorable working conditions. Hardly are they found in furnished offices, instead they are put in large staff rooms, a times with students type of desks and chairs, whereas their counterparts in other sectors could have executive air-condition offices, private secretary or even messengers and reserved parking spaces, and could belong to prestigious clubs and association, be entitled to tree lunch etc. these help to boost their ego as they are looked upon as being successful. Therefore, if education at the technical college level will be restored to acceptable level, hygiene-motivator principles must be applied in the administration for the purpose of getting teachers to have satisfaction from their job. (Ariwerikuma, 1986).

4. Poor Professional, Personal and Public Image While the general attitudes of the public towards technical education and technical teachers have been found to be negative, the teachers themselves act and talk that way instead of reorienting and correcting the misconceptions that the public have about technical education. The general public must be made to recognize that technical teachers are the backbone of any nation for technological development.

5. Lack of Well Equipped Library for Research Work/Project. Technical College Teachers that are ready to carry out some research work/projects cannot do this successfully because the libraries are not stocked with up-to-date textbooks and periodicals in their area of specialization. Where the textbooks are available locally, the teachers could not afford them because of meager salaries. Therefore, the technical teachers may - not be motivated to embark on any project that will be useful to society.

6. Frequent Curriculum Change in Technical Colleges With the establishment of National Business and Technical Education Board (NABTEB) few years ago all technical colleges are mandated to use the curriculum developed by NABTEB's curriculum which differs from the former West African Examinations Council (WAEC) technical syllabus. The curriculum is very comprehensive and has more courses. This according to Ekpenyong (1995) means that the technical college must be versatile in these areas and in the general and science education courses.

7. Lack of Well-Articulated In-services Education Programme for Technical Teachers It has been observed that some of the technical college teachers do not have any teaching qualification and no provision has been made for them by the employers in this area to serve as incentives for these teachers. They should be encouraged to attend some vocational teacher education programme during long vacations to equip them as professional teachers and not cheaters.

8. In-sufficient University Admission for Training of Technical College Teachers University admission either on full-time or part-time basis for technical teachers at bachelor, masters and doctorate levels are not sufficient. There are only few universities in Nigeria that offer technical education and thus admitting only a few selected out of a great number that apply each year. The technical college teacher with all their predicaments play vital role in the overall development of this nation as they continue to strive harder with available resources to mould Nigeria's tomorrow technologically base and development by imparting and training the Nigerian child to be self employed, self reliant, and also provide the technological background for students that would want to become technologists or engineers for the good of Nigeria.

Prospects of Technical College Teachers

1. Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD) There is provision in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 4th Edition (2004) relating to Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (MCPD). An individual shall be able to choose between continuing full time study, combining work with study or embarking on full time employment without excluding the prospect of resuming studies later on. Professional development avails teachers the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their profound competence against set standards such an opportunity will be original, creative and though provoking. Professional development is absolutely essential for the strength, vibrancy and future of the teacher profession

2. Use of Information Technology for Teaching and Learning Information technology (IT) is affecting education in revolutionary ways and the momentum is irreversible Information Communication Technology (ICT) programmes has been incorporated in all teachers training programmes Technical College teachers may use IT as teaching and learning tool to harness the advantages of educational delivery. The virtual library as a platform for sharing knowledge is aimed at rejuvenating Nigerian schools through the provision of current books, journals, and other information resources using digital technology

The objective of National Virtual Library Project include among others the improvement of the quality of teaching and research at all levels of education in Nigeria through the provision of current book, journals and other library services information and communication technology facilities will ensure that the benefits of the virtual library permeate all levels of education in Nigeria.

3. Technical Teacher Training Programme (TTTP) The generality of the people are becoming aware of the economic value of technical education as the avenue for turning the economy and technology around. According to Edigin (2000) the federal government's recognition of vocational and technical education as a powerful tools for technological development has created public awarness of the indispensability of this aspect of education. This is seen through the establishment and expansion of more institution of vocational and technical education to provide the needed manpower in the sector. The technical teachers training programme (TTTP) introduced by the federal ministry of education is a deliberate attempt to brighten the future of the technical college teachers by sponsoring them to the higher heights of the ladder in their profession.

4. Professional Diploma in Education All teachers in education institutions shall be professionally trained A one year professional diploma in education (former technical registration council of Nigeria (TRCN) has been structured to equip technical teachers without teaching qualification for effective performance of their duties. This will facilities the extension of the best professional development programmes to the teacher.

Conclusion

Technical college teachers in Nigeria encounter several problems in their teaching job. These problems range from inadequate supply of infrastructural materials, poor professional personal and public image. Lack of teacher motivation, lack of well articulated in-service education programmes for technical teachers to insufficient university admission. The technical college teacher can now demonstrate a state of pride and job satisfaction with the Mandatory Continuing Profession Development (MCPD), Professional Diploma in Education (PDE) and Technical Teachers Training Programme (TTTP) put in place to brighten their future and elevate them to higher heights of the profession.

Recommendations

- The federal and state governments should make frantic efforts to provide functional technical/vocational workshops in the various vocational trades.
- Management in technical colleges and the governments should release funds for the procurement and distribution of training materials to teachers in technical colleges.
- The teachers registration council of Nigeria (TRCN) should ensure that only trained technical teachers with professional teaching qualifications should be employed and allowed to teach in technical colleges.
- Needed classroom facilities should be provided by government for effective teaching/learning of technical education courses.
- Technical education teachers should be encouraged to proceed on in-service training for update on emergent issues and development in technical courses.
- Universities should increased the number of admission (intakes of interested candidates) into the technical disciplines in view of the fact that we are now in technological era.
- Technical colleges should be adequately funded to enable students and staff embark on designing and constructing prototypes that could be developed to parents by the private sector.

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