

Teacher Preparation and Vision 20:2020: The Challenges Ahead

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Abstract

The teacher has been identified as a major player in the realization of Nigeria's Vision 20:2020. This is true to the fact that education is an essential ingredient in the Vision 20:2020 initiative. At the centre of the system of education is the teacher, who translates the curriculum document into reality in order to achieve the national goals of education. However, the extent to which the Nigerian teacher is or has been prepared to key into this Vision 20:2020 enterprise remains a source of concern to all and sundry. It is against this background that this article reviewed Vision 20:2020 and the concepts of teaching and teacher. Some basic components of teacher preparation were also highlighted. Teachers capacity building and formulation of a sound national policy on teacher education were among the recommendations made.

Introduction

Education is an instrument "par excellent" for effecting national development (FGN, 2004: 4). Accordingly, formal education has been introduced with institutions at various levels for its dispensation. Central to the successful and meaningful dispensation of formal education is the curriculum, which in a very brief sense is seen as all the experience to which an individual or learner is exposed under the auspices of the school within a specific period of time. The teacher has been identified as the major actor in the curriculum implementation process. Hence, he is often referred to as a motivator and facilitator of the teaching – learning process. He supervises learning and provides the background for learning to thrive. The teacher creates a congenial atmosphere for learning to flourish. The above exposition, therefore, reveals, the obvious fact that no meaningful acquisition of knowledge or a relatively permanent change in behaviour can take place in the classrooms without the presence of a teacher who is worth his onions.

Given the fact that education is the bedrock of development in every society, and that no system of education may rise above the quality of its teachers, it becomes incumbent upon all and sundry to revisit the issue of preparing teachers for the years 2020 plus and the challenges resulting therefrom. To make for a comprehensive digestion or understanding of this article, the author reviewed the paper in a manner that explains Nigeria's vision 20:2020 and components of teacher preparation.

Vision 20:2020

Nigeria's vision 20:2020 is a roadmap focused to transform the country into one of the world's top twenty economies by the year 2020. This initiative was first mooted by the administration of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), but it was the late President Umaru Musa Yar'adua led administration that set up the National Council on Vision 2020, in May 2009, to develop a blueprint for the vision in collaboration with the National Planning Commission (Igbuzor, 2010). According to Nigeria vision 20:2020 Economic Blueprint (2009).

“By the year 2020, Nigeria will have a large, strong, diversified, sustainable and competitive economy that effectively harnesses the talents and energies of its people and responsibly exploits its natural endowments to guarantee a high standard of living and of quality of life to its citizens.”(p.9)

Going by the above assertion, Nigeria shall join the first twenty great and developed industrialized nations of the world in the year 2020. This means having economic power, technological power, food security power, transportation power, communication power, health power, an organized society, and cultural diversity power. In addition, this vision will involve the attainment of good governance among the Nigerian citizens, democratic confidence, free and fair election, sense and feeling of safety of lives and properties (Bolarin, 2010).

From the foregoing, it is visibly clear that education is about the most potent instrument in attaining vision 20:2020. This lies in the truth of the fact that education is a direct means through which people seek to shape their destiny and transit themselves from what they are to what they hope to be (Nwose, 2009). Education, therefore, becomes the driving force through which all the variables of vision 20:2020 can be achieved, and crucial to education is implementation of the curriculum document which marks out “teaching” and the “teacher” prominently.

Teacher preparation for the years 2020 plus

Curriculum implementation in every system of education has made the concepts of “Teaching” and the “Teacher” issues to be taken very seriously in the education enterprise, the building of a free and democratic society; a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy; and a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens are attainable through the conscious implementation of the art and science of teaching, and the capacity building and motivation of teachers, among other factors. The plank of the national goals of Nigeria and the vision 20:2020 hinges on human capital development which is a major function of the education with the teacher at the centre of the system. The teacher, therefore, is a major or primary factor in the attainment of vision 2020.

For the purpose of this article, we shall look at the concepts of “Teaching” and the “Teacher” before delving into the components of teacher preparation.

Teaching: Literarily speaking, teaching is the act of giving instruction, knowledge or skill to an individual or group of individuals in a specified setting. This definition though correct, is very simplistic. There is a general agreement among practitioners that teaching is a complex activity. For instance, Bidwell (1973) defines teaching as a series of interactions between someone in the role of teacher and someone in the role of a learner, with the explicit goal of changing one or more of the learners’ cognitive states. It is the belief of Emeh and Erukoha (2004) that teaching is a normatively purposeful activity which allows its changed object a measure of self-determination. Going by the flexible and dynamic nature of the term ‘teaching’, Mangal and Mangal (2009) defined it as a triadic relation and tripolar process involving the source of teaching (human or material), student and a set of activities designed and manipulated primarily to bring changes in the behaviour of the student. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that teaching is interactive, purposeful, goal-oriented and involves well planned activities. In the views of Pollard, Anderson, Maddock, Swaffield, Warin and Warwick (2008) teaching is a complex and highly skilled activity which, above all requires classroom teachers to exercise judgment in deciding how to act. High-quality teaching, and thus pupil learning, is dependent on the existence of such professional expertise. This suggests that teaching is directed or facilitated by a professional whose activities result to learning.

Teacher: From the working definitions of teaching highlighted above, one would not be mistaking to say that a teacher is one who is not only knowledgeable, but also experienced to guide persons who are less knowledgeable and less experienced to exhibit a desired or desirable change in behaviour resulting from formal education. Thus, a teacher is one who can successfully guide the learning of the learner by

determining worthwhile instructional objectives, selecting and arranging learning experience, guiding, motivating as well as assessing and correcting the learning with a view to ensuring and improving on learning (Onyejekwe, 2006). This implies that for anyone to execute teaching, he/she must be professionally trained and qualified for that purpose. For this reason, FGN (2004) asserts that since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers government shall continue to place emphasis on attaining the highest standards possible in teaching in the country.

Components of teacher preparation

It has been pointed out earlier that education is the bedrock of development in every society, Nigeria inclusive. At the centre of education is the teacher who implements and translates all policies, programmes and projects into reality. The teacher's activities is directly related to human capacity building which is a basic ingredient of development in all ramifications. Nigeria's vision 20:2020 is a set of developmental strides that will launch the nation into greatness. A critical look at the above, reveals the obvious fact that there exists a filial relationship between the teacher and vision 20:2020. However, the extent to which the teacher has been prepared or is prepared to translate the dreams of the vision into reality remains a source of great concern to many Nigerians. Let us consider or take a look at some components of teacher preparation in Nigeria. These include the following:

- Teacher training curriculum
- Readiness to embrace emerging issues
- Acquisition of skills for assessment/evaluation.
- Capacity building towards being resourceful
- Information Communication Technology (ICT) compliance.

Teacher training curriculum

The National Policy of Education maintains that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained by ensuring that the teacher training curriculum be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. Unfortunately however, teacher training in Nigeria is rather fraught with challenges. Many curricular for training teachers are no longer suitable, adequate and relevant to the needs of contemporary society (Aninwene, 2011). Existing curricular for teacher education do not position the schools within the purview of life long education, global economic competitiveness and values re-orientation. Seemingly curricular content for teacher education is docile in the sense, that they do not impact positively on society via schools, because the courses content have been over taken by emergent issues. In some cases, equipment, materials and other resources required for curriculum and instructional delivery may be obsolete, inadequate or not available. Rather than devising a curriculum engineering process to make teacher education responsive, teacher training institutions have resorted to classifying teachers by some hierarchical qualifications as in NCE, B.Ed, PGDE, M.Ed and Ph.D holders (Aninwene, 2011).

In a similar development, teacher quality is a confirmation of education received during the period of training. Sadly, teacher education curriculum and programmes specification in the training institutions are yet to address the challenges of teaching in the basic schools (i.e. nursery, primary and junior secondary). Even though the curriculum specification for the basic education subsector have been restructured and renewed, pre-service National Certificate in Education (NCE) teachers are ill-equipped to cope with the demands of these new specification (Obioma, 2010).

Furthermore, the education system in Nigeria has not evolved a clear cut standing policy on teacher education (Ajeyalemi, 2008), instead there has been some incoherent and uncoordinated programmes mounted for teachers at one time or the other. These include Special Teacher Upgrading Programme

(STUP), Pivotal Teachers' Training Programme (PTTP) and the Federal Teachers' Scheme (FTS), to mention a few, which are hardly evaluated, monitored and followed-up (Okujagu, 2012).

Readiness to embrace emerging issues

It has been revealed that the teacher education curriculum is not responding to the challenges of the moment, due to its 'static' nature. For this reason, many teachers in Nigerian schools do not easily lend themselves to embracing emerging or emergent issues in the education sector. Teachers, in course of their training, have received some rigid and stereotyped knowledge, skills and attitude, and as a result do not easily bulge when there is obvious need for modification. This posture which has made teachers to become traditionalists hinders or limits their ability and disposition to accepting new and modern methodologies, for curriculum and instructional delivery, and modern and complementary curriculum and instructional resources, materials and technologies. This disposition has also led to Nigerian teachers developing negative attitude toward the inclusion of some subjects in the school curriculum. For instance, teachers developed resistance to the teaching of some school subjects as social studies, sex education population and family life education, environmental education, entrepreneurial education and computer education at their initial introduction. The reason being that the type of training they received is not such that can make them to be quickly disposed to accepting and embracing emergent issues and phenomena in the society through education.

Acquisition of skills for assessment/evaluation

The policy document enunciates that educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual. This meant that promotion of students from one class level to another, and from one level of education to the other, shall no longer be based on a one-shot final examination, but by a mechanism whereby students' progress are continually assessed. It is a systematic way of arriving at the final grade of learners during a given period of schooling, and the aim is to give the truest possible picture of each student's ability, among others.

Viewed from this perspective, it becomes glaring that assessment and evaluation in the education system is tasking and rigorous. Therefore, teachers need to acquire skills to enable them execute this all-important component of the system. According to Yoloye (2009), teachers require the following skills:

1. 'Skills in the planning, construction and use of achievement tests and other instruments for measuring learning.
2. Skills in the planning, construction and use of instruments for assessing personality characteristics.
3. Skills in the interpretation of scores from assessment instruments.
4. Computational skills for (a) converting raw scores into more meaningful forms (b) giving appropriate weights to scores from different sources, and (c) combining scores from different measures to get an overall score.
5. Skills in the keeping of records and preparation of reports.' (p.8)

The above-highlighted skills for assessment and evaluation in Nigerian schools appear not to be 'deep-rooted' in the teachers. Consequently, the need arises for all teachers to imbibe the skills to adequately prosecute assessment and evaluation in the classrooms.

Capacity building towards being resourceful:

As major key players in the education enterprise, teachers need to build their capacities more frequently. Capacity building would afford teachers the opportunity to keep abreast of new and modern curriculum and instructional methodologies, materials, resources and technologies. Teachers are also brought to terms with emergent issues in education and how to handle or tackle such issues.

On a general note, capacity building brings about novel solutions to challenges. Experiences over the years show that after graduation from the training institutions, teacher when employed in schools to teach hardly attend capacity building exercises such as workshops, conferences, seminars symposia etc, except for the very few skeletal, 'political' workshops organized by Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), teachers are not willing to sponsor themselves to capacity building initiatives that will increase and improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes in their career. The result is that they have limited knowledge and skills and are not resourceful enough to implement the educational curriculum.

However, this attitude could be attributed to the low income of teachers in the country. Teachers workload is heavy and challenging to the extent that they have no time to source for additional income elsewhere, even when the opportunity becomes available. Hence, they and their family members depend solely on the meager salary that is irregularly paid. Even though the above picture may not expressly encourage teachers to sponsor themselves for capacity building, it is still worthwhile for every professional to actualized in his chosen profession by being more knowledgeable, skillful and resourceful. This is the joy of being a professional.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) compliance

One major innovation in the National Policy on Education is the introduction of Information Communication Technology (ICT) into the school system. Consequently, computer education has been introduced as a school subject or curriculum offering in primary, secondary and even tertiary institutions of learning. Introduction of ICT into education lies in the fact that it has the potentials to foster quality education delivery in order to meet local needs and to adopt international best practices (Okujagu, 2012). Primarily, teachers are largely responsible for translation and implementation of educational policies, curriculum, instructional materials packages and assessment of learning outcomes at all levels of learning, therefore, the focus of any educational programme should be on the teacher, who is crucial in translating policy into practice (Maduewesi, 2005 & Afe, 2003).

Computer education as a school subject or curriculum offering is at a cross-road right now. One reason for this, is that the teachers who are to 'demystify' the computer by translating it to practice are largely illiterates in computer and its operations. Other reasons include lack of requisite ICT infrastructure, low capacity of existing ICT teachers and the challenges posed by power and energy. Unfortunately enough too, computer education appears not to be accorded its place of pride in the teacher education curriculum, perhaps, due to lack of a policy on teacher education.

Conclusion

The functionality of society depends on the individuals' access to education. Individuals inhabit society and education is a tool to develop and harness potential and talents in human beings. If individuals have access to education, but teachers are not acting responsibly in the discharge of their professional duties, human capacity development may become a mirage. This will eventually lead to low productivity, underdevelopment and poverty. Therefore, teachers should be adequately prepared to surmount the development challenges of the 21st century.

Recommendation

Education is of great importance to both developing and developed societies. This is because the functionality of individuals depends on their capacities, and these capacities are in turn dependent on their access to education. Access to qualitative education engenders high productivity through manpower

development (Okujagu, 2012). Improving teachers' quality is paramount for causing improvement at all levels of education in Nigeria, thus the following recommendations are made:

- Appropriate and concerned authorities should radically reform the teacher education programme by re-engineering the teacher education curriculum to reflect and respond to emergent and emerging issues in the contemporary society. This calls for a review of teacher education curriculum.
- Modern curriculum and instructional materials, equipment and resources should be made available in adequate quantities. This could be by either direct procurement, improvisation or both.
- A clear cut national policy on teacher education should be formulated to adequately guide the training of teachers.
- Capacity building exercises organized for teachers should be evaluated, monitored and followed-up. This is to ensure that the new knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired during the exercises are integrated by teachers during teaching.
- Teachers should have or develop a positive attitude towards new or emerging issues in education. They should shift from their traditional disposition to a progressive stance so as to embrace emerging issues in education with ease.
- Apart from building the skills for assessment and evaluation into the teacher education curriculum, greater effort should be made to build teachers' capacities in the direction of assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes through the refresher courses.
- Capacity building exercises on pedagogy, production and utilization of curriculum and instructional materials, equipment and other resources should be vigorously pursued by relevant agencies and teachers more frequently.
- Teachers should be encouraged to attend educational conferences, workshops, seminars, symposia etc through payment of special allowances to them for that purpose, and attendance of such capacity building exercises should be made a major pre-requisite, among others, for promotion of teachers.
- ICT education should be integrated into teacher education curriculum, and the necessary ICT infrastructure installed. This is to enable teachers acquire knowledge and skills required to demystify computer and its operations for students in the classroom.

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