

ORIENTATION PROCESS AND TEACHERS' EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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ABSTRACT

Orientation is used in this article as training or information that teachers receive during or before settling down as service teachers. Obviously, the essence is to get such teachers equipped with basic practice situations of the school system. This paper focuses on teachers' effectiveness and orientation for beginning/newly employed teachers in Nigeria. Despite efforts to help beginning teachers succeed, many still experience problems, ranging from feelings of isolation to lack of support from experienced teachers and supervisors. Concern about the quality of teaching has focused attention on the quality of teacher preparation. Spurred by legislative mandates, commission reports, research findings, and personal commitments, teacher educators around the country are considering a variety of programmatic changes to enhance effective teaching and learning. To maintain quality in education and implement different government schemes successfully, effective teachers are essential. Keeping in view on all these, the present study was conducted to study the orientation process and teachers' effectiveness in tertiary institutions in Nigeria, its challenges and way forward. Teachers in this stage have a specific role to play in order to make students responsible, dynamic, skilled, resourceful, honest and enterprising citizens of good moral character and conduct. One of the recommendations was that government at all levels and private schools owners should to plan special and continuing in-service activities with topics directly related to the needs and interests of beginning teachers.

KEY WORDS: Orientation Process, Teachers' Effectiveness, Tertiary Institution and Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Developed countries will always trace their roots of success in all sectors to the effectiveness of their teaching profession. The long chain of all other professions like medicine, law and engineering originates from the teaching profession. Reverse is the case in Nigeria. According to Mizell (2010) teaching has been seen as a mere activity, occupation and vocation for the academic losers. Adu, Oshati and Eze (2013) refer to teachers as substitutes on the bench

of life, who are left with no option than to proceed and get employed into the teaching profession. It is worrisome in Nigeria that teaching profession has moved from the foreground to the background which the aftermaths are continuous insecurity, under-development, retrogression, corruption, indoctrination, low-technological advancement, economic insufficiency, cultism, mediocrity, students unrest just to mention but a few (Bharath, Umaselvi and Kuma, 2011).

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 given society at any point in time (Abdul, 2016). According to him, it includes training and or education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job). Also Loughran (2014) posited that every society requires adequate human and material resources to improve its social organization, preserve the culture, enhance economic development and reform the political structures. Loughran further stated that education is often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity. Thus, teachers have important role to play to adequately prepare the young for their roles in the society in order to achieve the set national objectives.

Education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge (Oluremi, 2013). In this regard, education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. Oluremi (2013) noted that the potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends imbued with instrumental values of nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy. Education has been recognized as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learners (Israel, 2015). According to Mizell (2010) believes that teachers' effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers. The fact remains that teaching and learning depend on teachers for there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any country without teachers. Also Burley (2011) noted that it is on teachers' numbers, quality and devotion that rest the effectiveness of all educational arrangements, development and growth. Even the educational planners may have the best educational policies and designs, the government may vote the largest sum of its revenue to education, but the ultimate realization of any set of aims for education depends on the teacher (Nagel, 2013)

Most schools plan for teachers' orientation but in spite of efforts to help teachers succeed, many still encounter adjustment problems. According to Desimone (2009), problems of beginning teachers shows that feelings of isolation; poor understanding of what is expected of them; workload and extra assignments that they were unprepared to handle; lack of supplies, materials, or equipment; poor physical facilities; and lack of support or help from experienced teachers or supervisors contribute to their feelings of frustration and failure.

The concept of orientation in the teaching profession has been embraced by many countries. Studies have shown that countries such as Switzerland, Japan, France, New Zealand, and China acculturate their new teachers, specifically their science and mathematics teachers, and shape their entry into the profession (Fishman, Konstantopoulos, Johnson and Edelson, 2013). For instance, in the Swiss system, teachers are assumed to be lifelong learners. From the start, beginning teachers are viewed as professionals, and orientation focuses on the development

of the person as well as on the development of the professional (Kisa and Correnti, 2014). In this case, orientation begins during student teaching a team of three students' net-worked with one another. It continues for beginning teachers in practice groups of some half a dozen teachers and is carried forward in mutual classroom observations between beginning teachers and experienced teachers. Thus, orientation moves seamlessly from a teacher's pre-service days to novice teaching to continuing professional learning.

Teachers' knowledge and beliefs play an important role in the planning and conducting of classroom teaching (Bergh, Ros, and Beijaard, 2014). Scholars have argued that teachers hold strong beliefs about in teaching and learning (Nagel, 2013). According to Nagel, these beliefs lie at the very heart of teaching. Research is therefore needed to understand the knowledge and beliefs teachers use for planning and conducting their lessons. Teachers' knowledge and beliefs have been the scope of interest in understanding their action and practice. For years, educational researchers studied pedagogical content knowledge as part of the knowledge base of teaching, aimed to help students gain a good understanding of specific subject matter (Oluremi, 2013). According to him, PCK that helps students understand specific concepts is the only knowledge used in classroom instruction that influences the decision-making of classroom teaching. In the often cited PCK model of Oluremi (2013), teachers' orientations towards teaching are based on their knowledge and beliefs of goals and purposes of teaching generally.

Teaching orientations for newly employed teachers play a critical role in the pedagogical content knowledge of teachers (Iyunade, 2011). Oluremi (2013), argued that teaching orientations serve as 'conceptual maps' that guide a teacher's instructional decisions about the organisation of curricula, classroom activities, student assignments, classroom materials, and the evaluation of students' learning, and thus shape the development of teachers' PCK. Ememe, Aitokhuehi, and Oluremi (2013) further stated that attempts of experienced teachers to teach in new ways are highly influenced by what teachers already know and believe about teaching, learning, and learners.

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2011), the Chinese education system established a teaching culture which features research groups and collective lesson planning. This culture ensures that all teachers learn to engage in joint work to support their teaching and their personal learning, as well as the learning of their pupils. The orientation programmes/processes are therefore designed to help bring new teachers into this culture. The orientation processes involves organizing learning opportunities at both the school and the district level (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). This is culminated by having activities such as; welcoming ceremonies at the School, district level workshops and courses, district organized teaching competitions, district-provided mentoring, a district hot line for new teachers that connects them with subject Specialists, district awards for outstanding novice/mentors, half-day training sessions at colleges of education and in schools foremost weeks of the year and peer observation, both in and outside of school.

Globally teaching has been considered as one of the most difficult of all professions to master, and developing the skills to effectively teach has been described as an exceptionally challenging process (Ijaiya, 2010). Consequently, beginning teachers are in the most pivotal year of their career, and the experiences associated with the transition from student to first year teacher influence their teaching effectiveness and longevity in the profession (Wright, 2010). Also Burley (2011) demonstrated that teachers who are beginning their career are more than two

times more likely to leave the teaching profession than teachers with more experience. Moreover, 15% of teachers in their second year and 10% of teachers in their third year on the job are reported to leave the profession (Clement, 2011).

According to Burley (2011), teaching is a complex work and pre-employment teacher preparation is rarely sufficient to provide all of the knowledge and skill necessary to successful teaching and a significant portion can only be acquired while on the job. It is against this background that some studies were carried out to establish the relevance of orientation programs in teaching profession. Researchers such as Ememe, Aitokhuehi, Jegede, and Ojo-Ajibare (2013) established that orientation programs are generally relevant to beginning teachers' wellbeing. They also pointed out that orientation programs contribute a feeling of being supported and being part of the school.

Another study by Rubinstein (2010) also reported a positive effect on a number of variables related to wellbeing, such as confidence in teaching, reduced feelings of isolation, and enthusiasm for work. According to him supporting orientation is important in improving their effectiveness with new teachers. Frey, (2011) randomly assigned 46 experienced teachers either to receive or not receive mentor training. At the beginning of school, mentors were each assigned to work with a beginning teacher for the first half of the school year. Data collected through classroom observations indicate that new teachers had higher ratings on adjusting classroom activities to meet students' interests, establishing routines and procedures, and keeping students on task if they were working with trained mentors rather than untrained mentors. Effective teachers are the key to maintain quality in education (Ememe, Aitokhuehi, Jegede, and Ojo-Ajibare, 2013). Effective teachers set high expectations and educational aspiration for the students and communicate them directly to the students. They challenge and inspire pupils, expecting the most from them, so as to extend their knowledge and understanding. He or she is always concerned with lesson clarity, instructional variety, task orientation, engagement in the learning process, and student success. Oluremi (2013) argued that although orientations play a critical role in distinguishing the quality of teaching, these orientations have not been well studied. According to Clement (2011), teaching orientation programs are not single homologous entities and should better be presented as complex entities with central and peripheral components. It is therefore important when investigating teachers orientations to carefully consider multiple components that are part of these orientations and factors that influence these orientations.

The Concept of Teaching Profession in Nigeria

Teaching profession in Nigeria has being faced with a lot of criticisms, maybe a profession or not (Frey, 2011). These criticisms have been making needed changes difficult and often incur resentment. Critics of teaching profession have said that teaching lacks the germane characteristics of a viable profession. For example, entrance and certification is not strictly controlled by the set standards. This is believed to open the flood gate for cheaters and unqualified staff to erode the standard of the teaching profession.

In Nigeria, teachers are poorly motivated and less paid (Bishop, 2011). This makes the profession replete with some features of other occupations that make life worth living for the practitioners. The orientation of those in teaching profession is that of very low esteem and those permanently stacked on a plateau. Joyce and Calhoun (2010) opined that teachers, the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) and others who have put up an advocacy about teaching as a

profession have identify those features of a real profession which are true of teaching in Nigeria. The characteristics possessed by teaching profession includes, being an occupation, an activity that requires basic skills, acquisition of a systematic body of knowledge, profession code of ethics and by various tiers of government.

In retrospect, teaching profession since the ages has been an occupation that enjoys the unpleasant nickname of an “ungrateful trade” a profession for the “never-do-well or an occupation for the down-trodden (Olaniyan and Ojo, 2014). Other members of the society regard teaching profession with contempt, feeling that it is a refuse camp for mediocre; people who are industrious but unimaginative and uncreative; people with average drive for power, average ambition and escapism (Breux, 2016). He further said the situation was worsened by the lingering social, economic and political crisis in Nigeria. Hence, the teachers were compelled to demand for:

1. Full professionalization of teaching
2. Better condition of service
3. Full professionalization of teaching
4. Prompt payment of the gratuities and pensions on retirement;
5. Adequate public recognition for teacher s that nurture all the productive citizens of the society
6. Special teacher’s salary structure (TSS).

The entire above mentioned requests are so important to the development of professionals, educational system and good citizenship.

Finally, teaching profession in Nigeria should be fully reckoned with and recognized so as to help keep the country (Nigeria) together in the midst of the tornado like frenzy we often find ourselves in without a lasting solution.

Problem of Teachers’ Orientation and Effectiveness in Nigeria

In spite of the various recommendations and reforms that targeted repositioning teacher education in the country for optimal performance, the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria are still numerous. While some of these emerged with the changing socio-economic and political condition of the time, others evolved as a result of government neglect of the education sector especially as it concerns keeping pace with emerging realities, such as, servicing Nigeria’s growing population, education demand and needs with matching supply of education services and facilities. Some of these challenges are specifically examined as follows:

1. Poor Policy Implementation:

Poor policy implementation is a challenge to quality delivery of teachers’ education. The poor quality delivery is responsible for the abysmal low performance of teachers’ graduates from the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. (Ayeni, 2012) argued that our policies are written by knowledgeable writers who have foresight and believe strongly in what they write for the future but the problem comes when it comes to translating theory into practice by implementers. However, several factors could be adduced as inhibitors to smooth implementation of educational policies and thereby resulting to poor quality delivery. Such as government underfunding of education and injudicious utilization of available funds by implementation agencies: vice chancellors, rectors, provosts, deans of faculties, heads of department etc. when funds meant to deliver quality education is misappropriated or embezzled, the education which learners receive becomes worthless.

2. Poor Conditions of Service and Brain Drain Syndrome:

In Nigeria, teachers' conditions of service do not hold enough incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigerian schools (Adu, Oshati and Eze, 2012). As a result of the weakening attraction to the teaching profession, and by extension the resultant dwindling enrolment in the teacher education programs, those who remain in the profession maintain relatively low social status with accompanying psychological problems. Consequently, within the remaining pool, some teachers either seek opportunities in other sectors with better service incentives or even migrate to other countries where teachers' conditions of service are much better, in search of greener pastures.

3. Quality Assurance and Internal Efficiency Issues:

The academic and emotional qualities of intending candidates for teacher education are critical for quality assurance and internal efficiency in teaching professions. In Nigerian tertiary schools, a trend has been evolving to the effect that candidates who apply to higher institutions for teacher education are those who have either been denied admission in their choice areas of study, or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular professional courses as medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc (Akinwumi, 2010). The usual shortage of applicants seeking admission into programs that would prepare them as teachers in universities and colleges is a pointer to why admission and placement in education programs is not as rigorous as it is in other programs earlier named. This is mostly opposed to the international standards for teacher selection. For example, the International Labor Organization (ILO) recommends that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities (Dilshad, 2010). Also, in more developed climes like the United Kingdom, applicants are compulsorily expected to possess certain intellectual qualities and personal characteristics before they are admitted for training (Bharath, Umaselvi and Kuma, 2011). In contrast, the Nigerian Universities, College of Education and Polytechnics conduct students' admissions based primarily on obtaining the minimum academic requirements while other internationally recognized pre-requisites such as emotional stability, physical fitness or qualities, moral uprightness and communication proficiencies are hardly given considerations.

In addition to the above, the low quality of teachers produced through in-service training by NTI is a serious challenge to teacher education in the country (Ayeni, 2012). Some Nigerian scholars have noted that most of the teachers upgraded to Teachers Grade II by NTI were very deficient not only in the academic subjects they teach, but also in techniques of teaching (Bharath, Umaselvi and Kuma, 2011; Ayeni, 2012). Perhaps, the most unpleasant challenge is one posed by the ongoing Pivotal Teacher Training Program (PTTP) which is currently being executed by the NTI. The PTTP is an intensive program of the federal government designed to raise teachers to implement the UBE program.

4. Insufficient Knowledge and Use of Information Communication Technology (ICT):

Another major challenge to teacher education in Nigeria is that of insufficient knowledge and use of ICT in a globalizing world (Abdul, 2011). The knowledge, and use, of computer technology as well as the internet is a necessity for all teachers to guarantee the relevance of the system and its products in the 21st century. Many schools in Nigeria still operate the traditional education system with little or no adaptation to ICT. Bharath, Umaselvi and Kuma (2011) stated that to benefit from the ubiquity of information and to facilitate communication among professional

networks, school teachers need, not only be trained and re-trained in ICTs, but facilities must be provided by government to enable teacher and their students access to these remain uninterrupted, more so that the world is gradually becoming a global village. For our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times (Ijaiya, 2010).

5. Non-Professionalization of Teaching:

Many teachers in Nigeria have not measured up to the minimum international standard (Abdul, 2011). This is because a large number of untrained and half-baked personnel are still retained in the system, leading to a scenario in which career in teaching is not yet professionalized. Many unqualified teachers are still in the employment of some States Teaching Service Boards, while most higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes this training mandatory and pursues the policy vigorously, teaching will continue to be open to anyone and this situation holds the potentials of further eroding professionalism in teaching profession (Abdul, 2011). Certainly, this has other wider socio-political and economic implications given the fact that education remains a very essential component that produces a healthy and prosperous nation (Adu, Oshati and Eze, 2013).

Conclusion

The above challenges are bane and sheer difficulties smearing the image of the teaching profession in Nigeria. The extent to which these challenges are solved will determine the prospects of teaching as a profession in Nigeria. Quality in education depends to a large extent on effective teachers. The person involved in teaching profession should try to be effective as effective teachers can set high expectations and educational aspiration for the students and communicate them directly to the students. Orientation programme for fresh teachers in tertiary institution is quite impactful as it educates, enlightens and is also interactive. It is beneficial to the fresh teacher as it helps to address many of their academic challenges. Orientation programme allows for the rules and regulations of the respective institutions concerned be clearly spelt out for freshmen's information and compliance.

In Nigeria, like many other developing countries in the world, teaching is the most vital and strategic profession for national development. This is so because teaching is that important activity which makes possible the acquisition of knowledge and skills that brings about the mark of an educated and useful person in the society. Education remains a single major factor for national development. The teacher is central in this enterprise, and no tool has been able to replace the teacher yet; this is because no educational system can rise above its teachers. The teacher holds the remedy to the many problems ravaging Nigeria.

Notwithstanding the laudable objectives and efforts made by various administration of Nigerian government, teacher education programs are largely lacking in quality neither do they conform to international standards.

Recommendations

Based on the findings made the following recommendations are deemed necessary:

1. Educational planners, stakeholders and agencies need to pair beginning teachers with master teachers to meet regularly to identify general problems before they become serious.
2. Government at all levels and private schools owners need to plan special and continuing in-service activities with topics directly related to the needs and interests of beginning teachers. Eventually, integrate beginning professional development activities with regular professional development activities.
3. Schools administrators need to carry on regular evaluation of teachers; evaluate strengths and weaknesses, present new information, demonstrate new skills, and provide opportunities for practice and feedback.
4. Beginning teachers should not be assigned to students that had been rejected by experienced teachers.
5. Beginning teachers should not be assigned to facilities that are regarded as less desirable by experienced teachers.

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