

Managing Teacher Preparation for Curriculum Execution and School Improvement in Rivers State

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Abstract

The teacher remains a critical part of the epicenter of the educational system. The importance attached to the role of the teacher in curriculum execution and value orientation makes teacher preparation or his future duties and responsibilities no less critical. In this paper therefore, teacher preparation is conceived and defined as an academic process (theory and practical) geared towards exposing and inculcating in the would-be teacher the required knowledge, skills, capacities, values and standards for a successful teaching career and increasing school and students improvement. Thus, this paper explores the place of managing the preparation of a would-be teacher with the aim of achieving the production of teachers with cutting edge qualities capable of leveraging learning environment and experiences that make learners responsive to the demands of globalization at a given level. To this end, the paper focused on planning issue, social perception of the teaching profession, issues of infrastructure, financial issues, policy issues, quality issues, entry processes, issues of motivation, profession issues, entry criteria. On the other hand, requirements for entering into the teaching profession, continuous professional learning, development and improvement, conditions for effective job execution and increased productivity, leveraging and standards are considered as continuing teacher preparation. The reason being that teaching is a “living thing” and dynamic phenomenon.

Keywords: Managing, teacher preparation, curriculum execution and school improvement.

1. Introduction

Education has been described as instrument par excellence in achieving national development (FRN, 2004). The content of education is encased in the curriculum. Any education worth its salt is basically the product of an effective and relatively adequate curriculum. The curriculum like a seed carries the full potentials and genetic characteristics of a given education, giving full realizations to the objectives as contained in its policy or statements of intent. In other words, the content of an education system is borne by or is contained in the curriculum (Obanya, 2004). Again, the content of any education receive structural and systematic organization through the differential curriculum that defines learning experiences hierarchically. Thus, the central function of the curriculum in the education endeavour cannot be overemphasized, Obanyas extensive and in-depth review of the role of UNESCO in the curriculum reform for educational development in Africa aptly underlines the point that education for the perpetuation of organized society depends on a curriculum (Obanya, 2004).

The central role of the curriculum in an education setting, no doubt, is clear. However, despite the avowed intention, the content of a curriculum and its objective may not achieve realization except interpreted and communicated to those standing to maximize them. The existence of educational content and objectives which are to be learned directly creates the role of a facilitator or teacher. Though admittedly, the curriculum content holds the essential “genetic programme” for survival, sustenance and regeneration of society, without the teacher who has been effectively equipped to enable or facilitate learning and acquisition of skills, knowledge, experience, that curriculum is as good as needless on arrival (Oni, Adetoro and Sule in Adeyemi and Awe, 2011). In the realization of effective curriculum execution, the teacher’s capacity or equipment is a critical factor. The National Policy on Education (2004) is clear on this as it is categorically stated that “no educational system can be above the quality of its teachers” (FRN, 2004).

1.1 Who is a Teacher?

The teacher has remained an interesting social factor in every society starting from when itinerant teachers went from house to house to educate the children of nobility and courts of kings. Beginning from Contucius (561 BC) who was the first private teacher in history, the teacher has been noted for the impartation of wisdom, helping in the development of sense of responsibility and character in learners (Who were some of the first ever teacher? (www.synergy-learning.com/firstlearning-teacher-in-history. Retrieved 27.08/2015). In the words of Aristotle, teachers are “those who educate children well and are honored more than they who produce them...” (www.biography.com/news/famous-teachers-in-history. Retrieved 27/08/2015).

To educate means to develop a person’s capacity, ability, attitudes, skills and competencies for survival

as an individual as well as make contributions to community or society (FRN, 2004). Aristotle's assertion that "those who educate children well are honored..." clearly suggest the social contributions of the teacher to society. The meaning of the name called the teacher in Indian culture, 'Guru', lends credence of the social contributions of the teacher in society. Guru means "a person who takes you off the darkness in order to see light". Literarily, this can be interpreted to mean the liberator from ignorance, the preparatory for life, the architect of life and success, the creator of civil society, etc. (T. K. soni-arnsdaily .net/20 12/07/1 2/who-is-a-teacher/. Retrieved 2 8th August, 2015-Who is the Teacher? AMSDAILY).

Generally, teachers are described as the most influential people in the life of a learner (Teachers as role models-teach.com.amsdaily.net.). They are also inspiration to others (Habits of an effective teacher/Edutopia-www. edutopia. or/discussion/i i-habitseffective-teachers. July, 2014-retrieved 28 August, 2015).

As a result of the importance of the teacher in being a role model, a positive influence and the general development of the learner, there is need to expose him to formal skills, capacities and knowledge to enable him carry out his duties effectively.

1.1.1 Need to prepare the teacher for his roles

Formal education and non-formal education which are received in designated places are planned and organized, usually coming under the general superintendence of Government bodies. Formal, mass literary, adult and non-formal educations are deliberate and systematic learning geared toward achieving the main national goals of Nigeria using education (FRN, 2004). To achieve this task, a category of education workers known as teachers are employed to execute the task of educating learners.

Like in other fields of human endeavours, where only those who meet certain specified criteria gain employment, teaching requires that would-be teachers also meet certain requirements in order to enter teaching employment. Here in Nigeria, the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession has been pegged at Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), usually obtained after a minimum of three academic sessions in an educational institution, faculty or college of education (FRN, 2004). In other places, the entry qualification into teaching profession varies. In the United States of America, a bachelor's degree is a basic requirement for public schools in addition to a recognized state license (How Much Education Do you Need to be a Teacher?-study.com/ how much education do you need to beateacher.html. Retrieved 27 August, 2015). In Finland, a European nation, entry qualification into the teaching profession is rigorous and high. A candidate requires a Master's degree in addition to practical criteria as specified by a given district (www.rmbae.org/entering-teaching-profession-in-finland -a rigorous-process).

Taken together, the criteria for entering into the teaching profession as represented by the few examples above, suggests that people aiming to enter the profession require formal preparation. Formal preparation therefore, are as specified by owners of public schools-the government. The preparation of teachers are often consciously contained in state laws, statutes and policies of education (FRN, 2004, www.helsinki.fi/ teacher education/step/information/qualification, Retrieved 28/08/2015).

1.1.2 What then is teaching preparation?

Teacher preparation is the process of producing teachers for an educational system. It is an academic process (theory and practical) geared towards exposing to, and inculcating in the would-be teacher, the required knowledge, skills, capacities, competencies, values and standards for a successful teaching career, and increasing school and learners' improvement. Ali (in Isyaku, Anikweze, Maiyangan & Olokun, 2000:1213) identify teacher preparation as a production of teachers who possess utilizable skills that will enable them be efficient and effective in the classroom and school by extension. Dashe and Taukek (2009) describe teacher preparation as that process of initiating, preparing and equipping of would-be professional teachers with relevant experience, skills and competencies that will qualify them to take on the responsibilities of the educational profession effectively.

Given the above description of teacher preparation, there is the tendency to see it as entirely an exercise carried out and solely reserved to the period of specified training in an institution, before the would-be teacher finally gets into the profession. Teacher preparation should be conceived as an exercise that goes beyond that point. It should be seen as a dynamic process that continues throughout the teaching career of the teacher. The teacher has to be continually prepared to adjust to the vagaries of time. Globalization, marketization, liberalization, climate change, sustainable development gender considerations, child rights, community development are some fundamental issues that should make teacher preparation an on-going process in order to have competent schools and competitively advantageous staff (Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2010; Khor, 2005 and Okeke, 2004).

1.1.3 Goal of the teacher preparation

The goal of teacher preparation is to have an efficient and effective crop of teachers who are able to execute the curriculum, impart positively on learners, and bring about helping learners to appreciate their environment and make contributions. Drawing from the National Policy on Education (2004), the goals of teacher education include:

- (a) Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers.
- (b) Encourage in teachers the spirit of inquiry and creativity.
- (c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and society at large, and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- (e) Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2004:39; FRN, 2009:14).

The essence of teacher preparation is to ensure that education available to learners exudes quality and standard commensurate to national expectations and in turn cause advancement to national endeavours. This expectation underlies the saying that “no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers”.

1.1.4 Preliminary issues in managing teacher preparation

Still guided by the notion that “no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers”, the issue of teacher preparation provokes conceptualization that goes beyond the curriculum, values and skills which the would-be teacher is put through. In other words, while the ‘process’ — training or education for a specified period is undoubtedly necessary, issues of pre-training or pre-education process and post-process- after school education are critically necessary in determining, enhancing and assuring qualitative preparation as well as projecting future requirements of a would-be teacher. Au in Isyaku, Anikweze, Maiyangan & Olokun (eds) (2000) refers indirectly to the preliminary issues in teacher preparation in terms of ‘presage factors, process factors and product factors’. Presage, process and product factors are conceived by Au (2000) to contain considerations of decisions regarding content of teacher education, decisions regarding entry criteria and pre-professional entry. These concerns are equally recognized and addressed as indicated at Paragraph 74 of Section 8 of National Policy on Education which inter alia reads that “Teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in curriculum. Teachers will be regularly exposed to innovations in their professional” (FRN, 2004:40).

1.1.5 The issues

Teacher preparation has been identified as a dynamic process of producing teachers equipped with the necessary skills, capacities, knowledge, values and standard required for teaching in an educational system. Thus, like any production process, the major issues have always remained effective management if results are to be achieved or goals attained. For teacher preparation, management is even more critical given that the ‘input’ is entirely human persons with varying degrees of peculiarities. It is also most critical because the ‘output’ (products) are expected to execute roles regarded as fundamental in the development and general wellness of society (FRN, 2004).

Some of the managerial issues arising in teacher preparation may range from:

- (a) Planning issues in teacher education and preparation (Amaele & Amaele, 2003; Okeke, 2006 and Enaohwo, 1990).
- (b) Social valuation of teaching profession
- (c) Near absence of educational facilities and infrastructures (Amaele & Amaele, 2003; FRN, 2009; Natesan, Jhitha and Srideri, 2010).
- (d) Financial resource issues (Dashe & Taukek, 2009).
- (e) Political decision issues (Rao, 2008 & Agabi, 2002; Adashe & Tankek, 2009).
- (f) Adequate platform in assessing entry (Amaele & Amaele, 2003).
- (g) Motivation issues (Ololube, 2011 and Rao, 2008).
- (h) Professional issues (a) Planning in teachers preparation remains significant (Lander & Myers, 1977).

Planning is a decisional tool which when applied to teacher preparation, helps to determine or give a picture of number of teachers the educational system has currently and would require in the future. It would also reveal contingencies needed to continuously address shortages, attrition and glut in manpower requirement in the sector. Enaohwo (1990) explains that manpower planning is deliberately pursued as “social objective to overcome the vicissitudes of the future”. While this should be the case for productive manpower pool, Amaele and Amaele (2003) have argued that the teacher education institutes and programmes are so many that they lack control over the admission of candidates. This position is supported by the fact that there does not exist any national policy on admission planning to teacher training or preparation platforms as in the case of Europe e.g. France and Finland (ndee.org). Further still, Amaele and Amaele (2003) point out that unplanned admission process in teacher preparation would have unprepared and uninterested would-be teachers in teacher perceive teaching as:

- (1) soft landing for all those who cannot access admission into other areas regarded as lucrative such as law, engineering, medicine, pharmacy etc.
- (2) to be counted as having attended university.
- (3) In most cases, as a faculty accommodative of the not-so-bright ones (Olubor in Adeyemi and Awe, 2011).

The bottom line is that lack of planning in teacher preparation/education resulting from the absence of

any known policy encourages ‘over-flooding’ of teacher preparation facilities, institutes and facilities. This situation invariably has consequences for teacher preparation quality and output.

- (b) The social perception of the teaching profession in Nigerian has been a factor that influences teacher preparation (FME, 2005). The factors of remuneration, wealth, prestige, absence of professional autonomy, appalling working conditions of the teacher, seem to affect teachers’ preparation (Oku, 2004:10). Amaele and Arnaele (2003) contend that regardless of the degree they hold, anyone can be employed to teach in the primary and secondary schools. This makes the teaching profession, all corners field and in turn helps to lower society’s perception about teaching.
- (c) Educational facilities: The presence of facilities in schools is important and remains instrumental in effective learning. Would be teachers would require facilities for practicals, research and simulations (Amaele and Amaele 2003). Dashe and Taukek (2009) identified dilapidated structures and facilities for teaching research, living, poor feeding for both staff and students as some of the challenges that face management of teacher preparation. They note that absence o these facilities in most Colleges of Education make them look like glorified Secondary Schools.
- (d) Financial Resources: Availability of financial resources play crucial role in all managerial responsibilities including the superintending over the provision of teacher education or preparation. Finance in any organization exists to address the challenges of provision, utility, purchase, and logistics. In teacher preparation, finance is readily tied to infrastructure, facilities, manpower, access, accomplishment, availability of incentives for teacher trainers and sundry workforce (Dashe and Taukek, 2009) and Amaele and Amaele (2003)). The non- availability of nceded logistics, facilities, incentives and infrastructure due to lack of financial resources could affect morale, performance and achievement of both would be teachers and their teachers or instructors (Arnaele & Amaele, 2003) The question of available funds or financial resources may be narrowed down to its judicious deployment. The role of management here is to devise ways to mix available resources in the school most efficiently and effectively to accomplish the goal of teacher preparation (Rao, 2008).
- (e) Political Decision Political policy or decisions reached at the policy making level have a role in teacher preparation. Political or policy decisions concerning education are often directed to access, provision, budget, type and length of education, goals and expectation, (FRN, 2004). How much resources allocated and to which programmes are all part of the decision taken at that level.

The type of decision taken on access, provision, goals, length, budget will to a large extent determine quantity and quality of teacher preparation or education, (Rao, 2008). The history of teacher preparation or education has shown that the demand for education, emphasizes on objective of education of a given epoch. programmes and policies had driven type, quantum of provision and access as well as resources made available at any material time (FRN, 2004; Taiwo, 1980: Amaele & Arnaele, 2003). Teacher preparation or education has always been affected in every given historical epoch by the society’s demand for and objectives of education as well as society’s vision of development (Okoke, 2004; Taiwo, 1980 and FRN, 2004). Thus it can be safely assured that quantum, access provision and resources available for teacher preparation may also he dependent on policy direction of a given society of nation.

- (f) Policy Requirements and Procedures for Entry: Entry requirements for teacher education in Nigeria has remained the traditional credits relevant to the varied course areas and an acceptable level of pass at Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) set by the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board. However, there is additional process in which individual universities administer Post-unified Matriculation Examination test. A test each university uses to assess validity and the authenticity of candidate’s claim of initial performance. This process is also applicable to even the teacher education or preparation programmes. These processes are essentially all that are needed to process entry for various degree courses in Nigerian tertiary education.

When the entry process for teacher preparation programmes in Nigeria is compared to what is obtainable in Finland’s educational system, it could be viewed though as adequate but not rigorous enough to sieve out candidates who may be deemed the best, most motivated and prepared to take teaching profession as ‘the best profession’. According to Park, (2012) who investigated Finland Teachers, less than 10% of applicants to teacher education programme are admitted yearly in what she describes as rigorous admission process. The admission process covers

- (a) A written test in which applicants are given several articles to read and then demonstrate their ability to analyze what they have read.
- (b) An interview designed to understand their motivation for becoming a teacher.
- (c) A 90 minute process in which applicants are given a pedagogical task and the admissions evaluators observe how the candidates think, communicate and interact with the group.

Comparatively, the entry or admission process into teacher preparation or education in Finland is more detailed and painstaking. It ensures the preparatory institutions put up all the necessary checks to ensure that the

best and only motivated applicants are accepted. The CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION BENCHMARKING confirms the rating of the selection process. (www.nceorg.org/center/finland/finland-teacher-and-principal-quality. Retrieved 28/08/ 2015).

(g) Professional issues: The professional issues of any given profession or career makes reasonable, unique demands and often remains what holds attraction to it.

Social status, prestige, respect, work itself, pay, conditions of service, benefits and incentives are important issues when consideration is being made in choice of a profession (Cole, 1997; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Okeke, 2004; Asodike, Ebong, Oluwuo & Abraham, 2013). In Nigeria, where perception of teaching as a profession is low, teacher preparation or education also seems to be affected the same syndrome. Choice to study education in the university is made reluctantly by students. Often it turns out that the choice to study education is made as a last resort especially when other choices are not accessible (FME, 2005 and Arnaele and Arnaele, 2003). This is contrary to what is seen in Finland are probably in other countries, where teaching ranks as one of the best profession. CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND BENCHMARKING, that investigated 'Teacher and Principal Quality' reported that, "Teaching is Finland's most respected profession; and Primary School teaching is the most sought-after career".

Investigation revealed that this position of teaching profession is not necessarily as a result of pay attached to teaching, but has to do more with the selection process, work itself and the working conditions and professional issues such as autonomy, body of knowledge, discipline etc.

1.1.6 Managing teacher preparation effectively

Effective teacher preparation means providing guidance, direction and motivation in the process of deploying various available educational resources towards the production of quality teacher workforce. In doing this, education manager overseeing teacher preparation consistently make decisions regarding the issues that present challenges to teacher production.

(1) Effective planning: Education managers are expected to demonstrate competence and adopt skills in issues of teachers demand and supply of teacher. Determining manpower requirement in the teaching force enable the educational system prepare adequately for the present and non-foreseen contingencies (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008 and Enaohwo, 1990).

(2) Entering teacher preparation: The need to shelve self-pride is now. There is every need for education managers to reach and adopt processes, procedures or methods that can ensure the best teachers are produced for our educational system.

It is not a hidden fact that our education lacks functional capacities compared to say the least what happens in Asia. Entry requirements into teacher preparation should be raised to ensure only the best 'brains' are going into teaching. Entry process should be more rigorous. Education managers may even embark on scouting and grassroots-secondary level, to achieve this (Arnaele and Amaele, 2003).

(3) Content and duration: Aleru (2015) and Isi (2015) have all raised the critical questions of internal quality control and assurance in University education and by extension, teacher preparation programmes. This relates to the doubt about teachers employability and entrepreneurial qualities. Education managers have the responsibility to supervise quality assurance and control of the educational system. This entails the effective supervision of every education programme from access through to finishing as well as the teaching force saddled with the responsibility of producing the graduates.

(4) Managing professional issues: Remuneration, social status, condition of service, autonomy and ethics are identified as criteria for traditional view of a profession (Ololube, 2011). There are also additional issues of human rights - freedom of association, freedom of speech and human dignity to contend with today at workplace including in teaching field. Education managers preparing teachers must accept that would-be teachers will bring with them these social, cultural and political situations. Properly managed process is likely to encourage or affect morale, cooperation and achievement in teacher preparation (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008).

(5) Policy implementation: National Policy on Education is very clear concerning teachers issues. The effort in teacher preparation is commendable as there are very many platforms for teacher training and production. There has also been a number of issues pertaining to educational services, professional growth, exposure to innovations in the profession, continuing teacher education, internship and in service training which have remained sore points in government policy in teacher preparation. Education managers are to bring these important issues before every government (Dashe and Taukek, 2009).

(6) Continuation criteria, process standardization, completion and certification: Education managers strategies in achieving effective teacher preparation must take into account the internal process of preparation.. The known standard for ascertaining continuation worthiness and readiness of would-be teachers in training has been continuous assessment and semester examinations. This, Arnaele and

Amaele (2003) have argued has not sufficed in producing teachers regarded as qualitative and employable in many ramifications. Attention therefore to shift to more practical and enduring strategies of identifying would-be teachers who may be ready after training.

Education managers could in addition to the traditional strategies, use the following:

- (a) Observation of would-be teacher in practical situations with different groups of children of different learning capacities for as long as a year out in the field.
- (b) Requesting would-be teachers to design appropriate methods for children of different social-cultural and economic backgrounds.
- (c) Develop long essays basically on experience in the field.
- (d) Identify what constitute their personal shortcomings while out there in the field.
- (e) Present one seminar paper per year in their subject areas.

All these are standardized and formatted into acceptable assessment continuum which both faculty and department can assess.

- (7) Entering the profession of teaching: It is a well known fact that non-medical doctors do not received license to practice neither do those not called to bar, have access to law practice. In this vein, teachers intending to practice or teach need beyond the certificate from their preparatory programmers. Teachers need to receive registration after a certifying examinations especially conducted by Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (FRN, 2004). This is not emphasized. To make matter worst, politicians use employment in teaching to settle their employment promises.

Education managers must go beyond mere interactive interview. Standard professional examinations must be devised for those intending to teach. Again, practical sessions need be organized to the versatility and veracity of intending teachers.

- (8) Teacher development and improvement: Every manager, whether in the manufacturing industry or education must emphasize organizational development and improvement. These come through planned human resource training and development.

In teacher preparation, continuous learning, training, improvement and professional development are necessary in view of the place of education in enhancing individual's readiness for an ever changing world (Lunenburg & Ornestein, 2008).

(9) Financial resource

There are two concerns here for education managers: Availability of budgeted money from the government or funding agencies and the effective and efficient utilization of available funds. Availability from funding agencies or government may depend on a number of factors usually control the of education managers. But effective use of available funds definitely has a lot of implications for teacher preparation such as quality of content of programme, manpower, facilities and research. Education managers with vision are able to achieve teacher preparation goals if financial resource are managed efficiently especially in an unstable economy as Nigeria's economy (Dahse and Taukek, 2009).

2.0 Conclusion

Teacher preparation is described equipping would-be teachers and already employed teacher with the capacities, skills, knowledge, competencies, values and standards for successful teaching is a critical factor in sustaining and achieving the goals of an education system. Just as in other human endeavours, teacher preparation raises a number of managerial issues in the process. These will include planning, motivation social status, finance, professional matters, policy and political decisions and quality issues. Accordingly, these issues require effective management to achieve an effective teacher preparation results.

2.1 Recommendations

For effective teacher preparation, the following suggestions are being put forward:

- ❖ There should be effective plan for teacher demand and supply and utilization process.
- ❖ There should be a national policy on would-be teacher admission process.
- ❖ The content and duration of teacher preparation require updating.
- ❖ Admission process to teacher preparation should be beyond the normal admission requirements into other courses of study.
- ❖ Education policy on teacher education and training should be implemented.
- ❖ Budgetary allocation to teacher education should be improve to accommodate and cater for necessary provisions for staff and would-be teachers.
- ❖ Policy on minimum teaching qualification should be revisited and possibly raised.
- ❖ Education managers found in the ministry of education and its subsidiaries should hold degrees or higher degrees in education.
- ❖ Issues of teachers and teachers' preparation should be regular discourses at education forum.

- ❖ Education managers should encourage high standard of professionalism in the teaching profession.
- ❖ Motivation for teachers should be emphasized.
- ❖ There should be a coordinated approach to teacher retraining.
- ❖ Budgetary allocation to teacher preparation platforms should be deployed judiciously.

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