

Teacher Education for Sustainable Development: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

This paper x-rayed teacher education in Nigeria with a view to producing quality teachers in Nigeria and in relation to sustainable national development. It reviewed the relevance and importance of teacher education and also highlighted on training and professional competencies of teachers. The concept of counselling was well explained in relation to teacher education for national development. Considering that guidance and counselling is a helping profession, the counsellors are to work in synergy with the teachers and headteachers in a conducive environment towards contributing to sustainable national development. The concept of sustainable national development was also highlighted as related to teacher education. Types and objectives of Teacher Education were briefly discussed in relationship with teachers' roles in national development. Conclusion were made and recommendations drawn from the discussion.

Keywords: Teacher, Education, Sustainable, National, Development, Counselling

Introduction

Teacher education is as old as man in Nigeria, starting from when the family gave birth to a child. The child can only learn the norms, cultural and religious values of the society where he/she finds himself/herself through the parents, siblings and relatives at home. The parents and siblings including the elderly relatives are the teachers of the child who have no formal professional educational training in the teaching field. According to Alye (2004), teacher education is seen as a complex process of professional education given to intending teachers to equip them with skills, knowledge and competence, which they need to assist individuals to receive quality educational experience that will enable such individuals to become independent lifelong learners, which they need to maintain their well-being throughout life. There are innovative techniques that are needed to be adopted in teacher education for sustainable development. These innovative techniques include programmed learning, teaching machine, computer in education, microteaching, team-teaching, distance learning and simulation, games and simulation-games.

Teacher education is a composite of the two basic concepts of ‘teacher’ and ‘education’. Teacher education is the form of education designed to produce teachers of desired quantity, quality and characteristics. While teaching and learning conditions are important, teachers are central to the question of education’s quality and relevance. How they are educated and prepared for their work is a critical indicator of what kind of educational quality is being sought. It is not unusual to find, in some countries, persons who have never undergone teacher education programme being appointed as teachers. Situation like this is not the norm but rather an exigency occasioned by acute shortage of trained teachers in many countries of the world (Enoh, 2003). Educational authorities in most countries today are probably more reluctant to resort to this scenario than they were ten or twenty years ago. Instead, efforts are made to give priority to structures that will guarantee the preparation of quality teachers.

Teacher education is thus the process of training that deals with the art of acquiring competencies and professional growth. It is an essential exercise that enhances the skills of learning and teaching. It is a means of providing teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge needed to enhance their efficiency.

Concept of Teacher Education

In an attempt to explain the concept of teacher education, there is need to take a critical look at these words, teaching, teacher and education. Teaching is one of the oldest professions. It is a process of imparting knowledge, skills, values, habits and attitudes to the learner by the teacher in order to modify or change his/her behaviour and achieve desirable outcomes (Onuoha-Chidiebere, 2014). It is an interpersonal influence aimed at changing the behaviour potentials of another person. It is a process of imparting knowledge, skills, values, facts, attitudes and aptitude by a knowledgeable and more experienced person to a less knowledgeable and inexperienced individual (Mkpa, 2009). For active teaching to occur there must be a teacher who facilitates and sustains the teaching. It is only when a teacher is adequately sound in concept, methods, strategies and techniques that he/she can impart effectively to the learner. This calls for caution on the part of the teacher in dealing with learners in classroom in order to achieve the pre-determined goals. Who then is a teacher?

A teacher is “a professional, who consciously and deliberately uses his/her wealth of experience, training skills, competencies, attitudes, interests, knowledge of contents with the help of instructional materials, methods/techniques to impart to a less experienced person” (Mkpa, 2009:104). A teacher is a person who imparts knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to a learner in order to modify or change his/her behaviour

(Onuoha-Chidiebere, 2014). A teacher is a professionally trained person who is knowledgeable in theory and practice of education. According to Offorma (2016:2), “a teacher is one who provides interventions in the school to ensure that the learners graduate as good products.” She further explained that a teacher is a person who recognizes the potentials of the learners and facilitates the blossoming of the potentials to make them useful members of the society. This means that the teacher should assist the learner’s potentials to flourish.

The teacher is the pivot upon which the successes of all classroom educational practices that metamorphose to national development revolve. This is why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2004:39) stated that “no education system may rise above the quality of its teacher; teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.” It thus becomes a matter of common fact that all teachers should be dedicated in discharging their duties. Okeke (2004) defined a teacher as a person who discovers or orders, directs, transmits, disseminates, appraises and administers knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in any teaching and learning setting. A teacher is one who aims at bringing about desired outcomes not only in the individual but the society at large.

Education is the light that drives away the darkness of ignorance and enables mankind to find its way through the tortures and labyrinth of development and civilization (Ikechukwu, 2006). It is an organized and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding of values for all activities of life (Abubakar, 2013). It is a process by which man solves his problems to improve his life and make it comfortable. Education is a formidable tool as well as one of the several ways that man employs to bring changes in his all-round development. Education is a systematic procedure for the transfer and transformation of culture through formal and informal training of people in a society. According to Ughamadu (2006:2), “education is the means by which the individual is developed so that he will be able to live effectively and efficiently in the present society and contribute to its advancement and upliftment”. Indeed, it is the systematic process of developing individual physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, politically and socially for his own benefit and for the benefit of the society in which he lives. Education is a process for transmission, preservation and improvement of the culture of a people (Offorma, 2016). It is a process through which human beings become morally good members of their society and help individuals to realize their potentials and thereby improve their society. Education is a force towards socio-economic and political transformation as well as a key to achieving sustainable development.

Teacher education is the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, schools and the wider community. According to Offorma (2016:6), “teacher education is the empowering of persons who will provide education (teacher) to the young and inexperienced members of the society to become functional members of the society.” It is the professional education of teachers to equip them with the right attitudes, skills and knowledge which will make them embark on their responsibility effectively and efficiently, focusing on the needs and aspiration of the society at any time (Osuji, 2009). Teacher education is providing professional education and specialized training to individuals who are interested in grooming the young learners to become responsible and functional members of the society (Akintade & Eyengbo, 2007). Teacher education refers to the process by which a teacher is equipped with the professional knowledge and skills necessary to educate others in general or specialized subjects. It is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein.

Teacher education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills.

1. **Teaching Skills:** Teaching skills would include providing training and practice in the different techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teacher to plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct effective assessment. It includes effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials and communication skills.
2. **Pedagogical Theory:** It includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage-specific and is based on the needs and requirements that are characteristics of that stage.
3. **Professional Skills:** Professional skills include the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers to grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. It includes soft skills, counselling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all life-long learning skills. An amalgamation of teaching skills, pedagogical theory and professional skills would help to create the right knowledge, values, attitudes and skills in teachers, thus promoting holistic development.

Concept of Counselling

Counselling is a process in which the counsellor, or therapist, helps someone to understand the causes of his problems and guide him through the process of learning to make good life decisions. Counselling takes place when a counsellor sees a client in a private and confidential setting to explore the difficulty the client is having, distress they may be experiencing or perhaps their dissatisfaction with life, or loss of a sense of direction and purpose. It is always at the request of the client as no one can properly be 'sent' for counselling.

Counselling is more personal and interactive than guidance. It involves one-to-one or one-to-a-group relationship between the client and the professional counsellor(s), in resolving his or her problem(s). Counselling has a wide range of procedures like advice giving, support in times of trouble or need, encouragement, test interpretation and information giving (Ogbodo, 2016). A brief look at different definitions of counselling from different writers' perspectives is provided below:

Bulus (1991) defines counselling as "that process which takes place in a one-to-one relationship between an individual troubled by problems with which he cannot cope alone, and a professional worker whose training and experience have qualified him or her to help others reach solutions to various types of personal difficulties. Aye (2004:9) sees counselling as a service rendered to an individual to help him to come to know himself so that he can solve his problems and to make him adjust to his new environment. Egbochuku (2008:91) opined that the provision of counselling services in secondary school has significant influence on the degree of students' behavioural problems.

Types and Objectives of Teacher Education

Teacher education can be categorised into two namely: pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education. Pre-service teacher education is the type of teacher education that is responsible for the fundamental background grooming of aspiring teachers for the acquisition of substantive foundation of curricular contents and pedagogy as well as professional values expected of teachers in whose hands the future of the children and the nation are entrusted. Many scholars supported the above definition asserting that pre-service training is the training teachers receive prior to their teaching service and the programme is specifically planned for would-be teachers (i.e. teachers who are not already in the field). The objectives of pre-service teacher training include the provision of course instruction and learning which are directed towards the provision of well qualified and suitable teachers for the educational

system; raising the standard of teaching; moulding the attitude of young student-teachers for teaching profession; organising seminars, workshops, conferences, study groups and other seminar related activities for the purpose of promoting effective teaching and learning; identifying with the difficulties associated with the teaching profession; and providing/offering solutions to these problems through research.

In-service training, though related to pre-service training, is the training acquired after the completion of the pre-service training. The essence of in-service training is to enhance the professional development of teachers. It can also be referred to as on-the-job training programme because it includes all professional development activities or programmes which the teacher undergoes after initial certification and recruitment. In-service training is of different types, namely: seminars, workshops, networking, building teams and cascade groups (aimed at making the teachers to be aware of developments in their area of specialty and pedagogy). The objectives of in-service training thus are as follows: elimination of weaknesses and deficiencies in the teaching-learning habits of teachers with its consequential effects on pupils; reinforcing academic and professional capabilities of teachers by complementing pre-service training; introduction and entrenchment of new but useful method, concepts and practices through the formulation and development of syllabuses sponsored or initiated by teachers, subject associations and other education personnel; making the teacher more effective and productive in the classroom by making him confident through the initiation of programmes aimed at upgrading the teacher's professional qualifications; inculcating in the teacher a commitment to meaningful and purposeful changes and innovation through the development of professional skills and the formation of professional attitudes; and availing the teacher to be up-to-date, adaptable and flexible by making him aware of contemporary educational trends, practice and national educational policies. Teacher education being an umbrella (pre-service and in-service) for equipping teachers with acquisition of skills, attitudes, competencies and knowledge, a new strategy such as an innovative technique has to be employed to equip teachers for sustainable development.

The Concept of Sustainable National Development

The concept of sustainable national development remains the modern parameter of measuring development. The Brundtland Commission (1987) defined sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.” In another definition by Munasinghe (2004), sustainable national development is a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and

communities to achieved their aspirations and full potential over a sustained period of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental system.

Age (2005:85) identified some objectives which sustainable national development is expected to realize including increase capital income and employment, promoting human welfare, satisfying basic needs, protecting the environment etc. Considering the path of future generation, achieving equity between rich and poor, and participation on broad basis in the development and decision making is important. From the above definitions, there are common features which they all share; that is prioritizing the development of the present generation without compromising the future generation.

Bwala and Koroma (2005) pointed out that education unlocks the door to modernization and sustainable development but that it is the teacher that holds the key to the door. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programmes into action. It is clear from the foregoing that the role of the teacher in sustainable development cannot be quantified, especially in training personnel in various areas of the workforce. For national development and peaceful co-existence to be attained, there is need to give priority to investment in human capital through teacher education and training. The Nigerian educational system needs to be responsive to the technological, social and economic needs of the society and provide the type of human resources needed in the industrial and economic sector. It is the role of effective teacher education programme to transmit the needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet their needs and the societal ones.

Implications for Counselling

Counselling is a process of helping a troubled person to understand himself and his world so as to feel and behave in a more personally satisfying manner. Thus, for teachers to perform their role effectively in adding value to individual and group's commitment toward sustainable national development, they must have to acquaint themselves in counselling techniques. Okonkwo (2007) observed that professional counsellors cannot afford to remain dormant and complacent while the constraints in the implementation of guidance and counselling continue. Consequently, counsellor should let the teachers know that there are many factors affecting the ability to impart knowledge on learners towards sustainable national development. The counsellors must address these issues by providing implications and utilizing some strategies, such as enlightening the teachers on the importance of praising students whenever they behave well. Teachers should be encouraged to praise them judiciously; the teachers should be guided on how to handle learners. Teachers should see the importance of

referral services, referral of learners to appropriate agencies, for examples to a counsellor. The authority should know that in school, a good building and classrooms foster a feeling of warmth and security; they should be informed that principals and teachers should create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Teachers should know that when the headteacher is a rigid disciplinarian, he breeds children who will be covered with fear, and that a teacher who is emotionally unstable, suffering from fears, worries, pain or much disturbed and poorly adjusted can also produce a class of nervous, tense and fearful students; while a confident, happy and well-adjusted teacher can also foster these qualities in class. The teachers should see the importance of providing a suitable physical environment and to know about wise use of punishment. When teachers punish students wisely, it helps students to recognize acceptable behaviours that will enable them react accordingly.

The teachers should know that group-work facilitates interaction and provides opportunity for group members to make contribution towards the work. The teachers should know how to create and provide opportunity for leadership. They should know that if a child is good in something, the child should lead in that activity. Furthermore, the teachers and adults should know the importance of living by example.

If all these are carried out, they will go a long way to promote the education system of individuals which in turn promotes national development. Counsellors should help teachers to know that schools, families and communities are the best places to develop and promote positive learning. Teachers should know that they have received some training in development principles that make them potentially well qualified to identify learners. There are specific roles to be performed by teachers in promoting education for sustainable national development, including showing a sense of humour to learners. When this is done, it creates a relaxed atmosphere and promotes interaction among them; giving students assignments or tasks according to competence creates the possibility of students completing assignments or tasks and getting a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction; creating counselling services thereby letting the children know the meaning of counselling which raises awareness in the students about the essence of guidance services. This will go a long way in promoting interpersonal relationship and by extension, opportunity for discussing the feelings and needs of students.

Conclusion

Teacher education is the cornerstone of achieving sustainable national development. Achieving sustainable national development is the goal of all nations. Teacher education for sustainable national development and counselling implications focuses on individuals and counselling which should be promoted at all levels of our educational system. The counselling services will improve the quality and standard of education by emphasizing the need for making the curriculum contents consistent with personal characteristics of its recipients to make it relevant and meaningful to its target beneficiaries.

However, teachers are the strength of every nation and the pivots upon which the success of all classrooms educational practices revolve. The education of teachers is therefore very important. Adequate attention and consideration should be given to teacher education in order to produce quality teachers who are capable of imparting the right knowledge and skills to students. It is only when teachers are being trained and retrained that the quality of education will improve.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Professional development programmes such as seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized for pre-service and in-service teachers to upgrade and update their knowledge and skills towards sustainable development.
2. The government, stakeholders and policymakers should make provisions for an in-service compulsory training for teachers at all educational levels in order to prepare and make them adequately functional in education for sustainable development in Nigeria.
3. Mentorship strategy should be integrated in teacher education in order to produce teachers whose professional growth has positive influence towards sustainable development.
4. Academically and professionally qualified counsellors and teachers should be recruited in teacher education to enhance the quality of education.
5. Teacher educators and students should be encouraged to improvise from their locality to enable them to be creative, innovative and resourceful.

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