

EFFECTIVE PREPARATION OF UBE TEACHERS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF UBE PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

There is general outcry among Nigerians regarding the imbalance standard of education in the country. This will not be unconnected to the fact that the quality of teachers produced by the teacher training institutions in the country felt short of expectation. The quality of teachers in any given country is a reflection of the education system which produced them since the quality of the products of any educational system can not be higher than that of the teachers charged with responsibility of facilitating learning among those who get exposed to that system. Teacher is therefore the most important factor in any educational undertaking. Governments effort towards providing free and compulsory education is expressed through universal basic education (UBE) programme. The success of UBE programme is lundred by many factors some of which include insufficient and unqualified teaching staff at basic education, poor preparation of teachers who will teach at basic education, poor laboratories and libraries e.t.c. In view of this the paper highlighted the objective of universal basic education programme and identified some propitious strategies that will help in improving the quantity of teacher preparation programme. Finally the paper suggested, among other measures, the need to review the content of teacher preparation programme and continuous monitoring of UBE programme for possible adaptation.

Introduction

Education is a veritable tool for achieving national development. The development of any nation is dependent upon the quality and functionality of its educational system. The quality of teachers at various levels of education determine, to a great extent, the effectiveness of education system toward achieving its desired objectives. According to Adesina (2005), the quality of education in any country is reflected and related to the quality of the men and women who serve as teachers in its school system. This therefore, underline the role of teachers in the development processes of any country. In Nigeria, government's desire to use education as instrument per excellence in providing free and compulsory education for the citizens is evidently pursued through universal basic Education (UBE) programme. The UBE, according to National policy on education, section 3 sub section 15, shall be of 9-year duration comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary education (FRN, 2004). The UBE programme is therefore, encumbered with major challenges among which is the quality of teaching personnels at foundation level of education.

The key star in the implementation of any programme in education is the teacher. Teaching at basic education is dominated by many more unqualified and incompetent teachers than qualified and competent one. According to Ivowi (2008), Right from basic education to the tertiary education levels of our education system there are claims of shortage of teachers. Most teachers in primary and secondary school levels who are suppose to implement the UBE package lack necessary competence and professional skills to actualize the programmes' objectives. They are therefore doing more damages than good in educating process. Many NCE teachers who are teaching in the secondary and even primary schools today are rarely competent and can not make simple correct sentences and hardly make good lesson plans in their areas of specialization (Nkang, 2008:35).

The universal Basic Education scheme can be seen as a timely and concrete educational programme but unfortunately most progmmames in education in this country felt short of expectation due to lack of adequate political will on the part of government and educational institutions.

THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME

As started earlier, UBE which shall be free and compulsory comprises the six years in primary education, the beginning for a child of formal education, and the three years of secondary education (JSS 1-3). The education shall include adult and non formal

education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels for the adults and out of school youths. The specific goals of Basic education shall be the same as the goals of the level of education to which it applies (i.e. primary education, junior secondary education and adult and non formal education) (FRN 2004). By this 9-year scheme, all children and even adults, particularly the challenged individuals, will have the opportunity of making a beginning at learning and that all recipients can expect to acquire at least the rudiment of three "R's" reading writing and arithmetic's. The basic ingredient of this new system is the proposed vocationalisation of the post basic education and review of the relevant curriculum at all levels to reflect the new focus and to take account of the emerging issues (Obioma, 2006:5).

According to FME (2000) the objectives of UBE are as follows:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong commitment for education and to its vigorous promotion;
- The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system through improved relevance, quality and efficiency;
- Catering for the learning needs of young persons who, for one reason or the other have to interrupt their schooling through appropriate form of complementary approaches to provision and promotion of basic education ; and
- Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communication and life skill as well as ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for the life long learning (FRN, 2000).

Given the objectives of the scheme above, it is evident that the success of UBE depends largely on effectiveness of teacher preparation programmes to train the teachers who will teach at Basic education levels.

TOWARD EFFECTIVE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS FOR UBE

In consideration of the vital role play by teachers toward ensuring the success of any educational programme, the current teachers preparatory programmes for UBE are required to be qualitative if the programme is to actualize its goals. The National policy on Education clearly stated that, teacher education programmes shall be

structured to Equip the teachers for the effective performance of their duties. The following institutions are charged with the responsibility of providing effective training for teachers in the country; namely:

- Colleges of Education
- Faculties of Education
- Institutes of Education
- National Teachers Institutes
- Schools of Education in the polytechnics
- National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAG)
- National Mathematics centre (NMC)

Most Teachers from these institutions lack necessary skill to handle a simple classroom situations. Some of the products of these institutions seem not to meet the minimum standard required of them by all stake holders (Omojuwa, 2007). Teacher education in Nigeria has been severely criticized for not fostering in teachers, adequate knowledge and skills for effective practice in schools. The success of the UBE programme to provide qualitative education for Nigerian citizen rests on the effectiveness of the above mentioned institutions to produce highly motivated teachers who are to teach at basic education levels. Teachers must be adequately prepared to carry out their assignment. To ensure effective preparation of teachers for UBE programme the following strategies are suggested.

PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING.

Teaching is a profession any where the world over. Teaching in Nigeria is not regarded by many people as a profession. Among other reasons for such. view is the fact that, teaching profession in Nigeria has failed to provide for itself an effective control entry into the profession for which reason there are more non professional so called teachers than the professional ones. Entry into a profession must be controlled. This is done through specification regarding such important aspect of professionalism, as pre requisite for entry into training, specified period of training, specialized knowledge acquired and the minimum qualification for entry into the profession. To give a sense of porofessionalism to teaching, the above attributes of a profession must be adhered to. The minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession as stated by section 4, subsection 70 (b) of the National policy on Education shall be the Nigerian certificate of Education (NCE) (FRN, 2004).

The Teachers Registration council of Nigeria (TRCN) must ensure proper control and regulation of teaching profession so as to match the professional standard of teaching

with that of other profession in the country. Persons without certificate for practice should not be allowed into the teaching profession. The council, after its sixteen years of existence (1993-2009), has not been able to enforce its rules and regulations on its members. The success of the UBE programme depend upon among other things, the professional standard of teaching interm of ability to attract and retain professionals who will transform any programme into reality.

CALIBRE OF APPLICANTS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION:

One of the serious bottle neck for effective preparation of teachers for UBE programme in the country is the quality of candidates admitted in the teacher education preparatory programmes, particularly at colleges of education. According to Nkang (2008), the NCE programmes in colleges of education draw their intakes from less bright secondary school leavers who would in no way get admission into other tertiary institutions because of poor academic performance. At university level, faculties of educations are now the dumping grounds for candulates who could not meet the requirements for admission into their first and second choices. In short, majority of the intakes into teacher education programme are the “dregs” from the education system. With this collection of low-caliber students in the teacher education programme, effective preparation of teachers for UBE is far the most difficult task.

A time has come, therefore for teacher educators to re-think their programme right from admission procedure through training to certification, if any success is expected form the 9-year basic education programe. Applicants into teacher preparatory programmes must be subjected to more rigorous selections to determine their intellectual abilities, personality, interest in teaching etc. so that better and qualitative raw materials is allowed in to the system for effective preparation and quality products that would meet the societal needs.

RE-EXAMINING THE CONTENT OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMMES.

The ability of teacher preparation programmes to provide prospective teachers with adequate knowledge and skills for effective practice is dependent upon the nature of such progmmames. The current situation in teaching profession and practice emphasized more education courses than subject matter (teaching subject). Most teachers in lower and upper basic education levels have shown poor mastery of subject matter content. One of the advocate of paradigm shift, wasagu (2008), commented that the current situation is that education courses are given equal, if not

more weight than the major content teaching subjects. Most graduates from say faculties of education, are found wanting in their teaching subjects. This situation is demonstrated by the present practices in the Nigerian universities in which graduates of education are not employed in the departments of their subject of specialization. This practice is not unconnected to the fact that teachers are more grounded in education than in their teaching courses.

According to Wasagu (2009), the current science teacher education programme as approved by the National University Commission (NUC) minimum academic standard is simply old-fashioned and most inefficient and ineffective. the present content of teacher preparation programme has to be reexamined to provide for more strength in teaching subjects.

Obioma (2006) stated that the curriculum of teacher education programme has been found to be narrow, stifling and out of tune with societal need. Teacher education programmes should be more dynamic and proactive to reflect the ever – changing societal demand (Obi, 2008:15). Omojuwa (2007) is of the view that teachers with strong preparatory foundation in the subject area tend to have the ability and knowledge to help student meet the challenges of new and more rigorous standard. Trainees are often provided with shallow training in the contents of the courses they are meant to teach after graduation (Omojowa 2007:105).

Educators should make their preparation programmes effective through content review that win guarantee acquisition of sufficient knowledge in the teaching subjects. By so doing UBE teachers are better equipped with pre requisite knowledge for effective practice in school which would inturn promote the quality in students achievement in the UBE programme.

SUFFICIENT PERIOD OF TEACHING PRACTICE.

Teaching practice is a vital component of teacher preparation programmes. However, teaching practice is awfully treated by both teacher educators and student teachers. It is very unfortunate for the system in which such important aspect which allow student teachers to put into practice, all the theories learnt in the classroom, is being relegated. Teaching practice afford student teachers the opportunity to acquire practical experience and participate actively in the various activities involved in the actual teaching situation.

As a matter of fact, the present organizational pattern of teaching practice in the country, particularly in universities, will offer little or no practical experience to student teachers. Teaching practice should not be done in a washy wishy manner; rather a sufficient period of time should be dedicated to it. This will offer opportunities for students teachers to acquire necessary skills and experience and for supervising lecturers to have sufficient time for supervision.

The supervising teachers, on whom the success of teaching practice depend, must be honest and sincere to both student teachers and programme itself by thorough supervision of all the students teachers in the schools assigned to them. They should not award marks to student teacher arbitrarily without assessment. Ogunkunle (2008) observe that:

The proposed one year teaching practice exercise should be after graduation so that teachers can be certified by teachers registration council of Nigeria (TRCN). The more emphasis that is palced on this aspect of the programme through proper monitering and implementation of the stated objectives in the TRCN'S act, the better for the teacher preparation progrmame.

It is evident from foregoing that teaching practice when extended from present period to a more sufficient one would enhance effectiveness in teacher preparation progrmame for UBE scheme. This would inturn improve the students performance at basic education.

Conclusion

Successful implementation of universal basic education programme depend largely on the quality of teacher education progrmame to produce effective teachers who will teach at upper and lower levels of basic education. Since basic education are over crowded by unprofessional unqualified teachers provisions must be made for in-service training of teachers as well for prompt action to employ qualified teachers to replace the bad eggs in the school system.

Recommendations

In view of the above the paper made the following recommendation:

1. Adequate provision should be made for re training of practicing teachers in basic education to enhance their efficiency in service delivery

2. unqualified teachers who are reluctant to obtain professional qualification should be made to quiet the system and be replaced with qualified ones.
3. implement of UBE programme is open-ended task. As such therefore, it must be continuously monitored to ascertain the success of the programme.
4. since no curriculum content is static, the content of teacher preparation programme should be reviewed to be in tune with the demand and realities of the dynamic society.

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