ADVANCEMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION: THE EVOLUTIONARY TRENDS IN NIGERIA AND CHINA JUDITH MAKSE PATRICK PH.D

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Abstract

The teacher is the bedrock of education which makes the education of the teacher of utmost importance. This is a theoretical paper with reviews gathered from related literature. It focuses on the evolutionary trends of teacher education. The motivation to compare Nigeria and China is partly because of the lack of elaborate literature on these two countries and the potential of benefitting from each other. This paper points out that both governments have gone a long way to improve and motivate citizens to go through teacher education programs but it has been besieged with challenges. The status of the teaching profession, quality of teachers

produced, provision for training and re-training infrastructure, instructional materials, funding and the growth of each nation among other challenges are highlighted. However, both countries agree that the quality of education in any country depends on the quality of teachers produced and priority has to be given to teacher education.

Keywords
Teacher education; evolutionary trends; educational system; challenges.

Introduction

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 society at any point in time. It includes training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on-the-job). As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education in both formal and non-formal sub-systems. It is a continuing process which focuses on teacher career development (UNESCO, 1990 & Osuji, 2009). Li (2006) further explains that teacher education denotes two major forms of education for the teaching profession at three levels, i.e., in the form of pre-service teacher education at the levels of normal schools, professional colleges, and normal universities/colleges, and in the form of in-service teacher education at county level of teacher schools, regional level of colleges of education and provincial level of colleges of education. Additionally, teacher education is referred to as 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, school and wider community (Nasiru, 2013). Nakpodia and Urien (2011 : 350) submit that, 'Teachers' education is the process which nurtures prospective teachers and updates qualified teachers' knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development'.

As the saying goes, no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers, so the need arises to accord teachers and teacher education the needed priority in order to raise quality teachers to facilitate the attainment of education goals (Nasiru, 2013).in the same vein, China Education and Research Network (1998 - 2013) submitted that the rejuvenation of a nation depends upon education and the development of education depends upon teachers. This might be the possible reason why each country at one point or the other keeps changing policies concerning teacher education and education in general.

History of Teacher Education

This section centers on the evolutionary trends in Nigeria and China

History of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education institutions started springing up in Nigeria since 1895 when Hope-Waddel Training Institute was established in Calabar. The British Colonial administration became involved in teacher training in 1914 when it established one institution in Bonny. In the Northern part of Nigeria one was established in 1909 at Nasarawa and another in 1921 at Katsina. By 1925, fourteen institutions had been established in the country. Up to 1960 when Nigeria attained independence, many teacher training institutions had been established by the Christian missionary agencies and a few by the government which produced Elementary Teachers (Grade 111) and Higher Elementary Certificate Teachers (Grade Il) (Osuji, 2009).

In a report on "Teaching profession and factors inhibiting teaching profession in Nigeria", Fakoya (2009) citing Fafunwa stated that by (1948), the total number of teacher training colleges assisted by the government had risen to fifty-three with a student-teacher population of 3,026. By 1932, Yaba Higher College started a three years course for teachers. He further cited the report of the Ashby Commission (set up in 1959) which proposed a bold plan for university programs in teacher-education. Fafunwa in Jekayinfa (n.d. para.3) further expounded on the Ashby Commission report about the fact that there was inadequate supply of trained and educated

teachers in "Nigeria secondary grammar schools" even when there was an increase in demand for more of this category of educational institutions. The Commission also recommended teacher education program at the university level, observing that the new crop of Grade I teachers popularly referred to as "well qualified non-graduate teachers" should be trained to man the lower levels of secondary schools and teacher training colleges. The commission therefore recommended the introduction of a Bachelor of Arts/Science degree in Education (B.A. (Ed.)/B .Sc, (Ed.) in all Nigerian universities.

National Policy on Education (NPE 2013, section 5B: 92b) stated that National Certificate in Education (NCE) will be the minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession. Nwaboku (2003) further submitted that NCE teachers will be for the primary and junior secondary levels; and at the time of this report there were 72 colleges of education while the training of teachers for the senior secondary level of education is conducted at the universities under the supervision and guidance of the National Universities Commission. While the colleges of education are solely teacher training institutions, universities have their teacher-training activities based in the faculties of education or the institutes of education. Despite the enormous number of teacher training institutions and the production of teachers in large numbers in the country, there is still acute shortage of teachers in our educational institutions (Jekayinfa, n.d.).

History of Teacher Education in China

Teacher education in Chinese is called shifanjiaoyu. Literally, shifan means teacher and teacher's role model, jiaoyuhas the meaning of educating and nurturing. This expression is said to have been coined around the 1980s (Li, 2006: 19-20). The same author briefly gives a background of how teacher education began gaining grounds in the country. The first school for training teachers in China was created about two hundred years later than the first Western normal school, the Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools founded by Jean Baptiste de La Salle (1651-1719) in Reims, France. The first normal school for training professional teachers in modern China

was founded in 1897 in Shanghai. On May 21 1902, the first independent normal school, Hubei Normal School (Hubei Shifan Xuetang), was founded by Zhang Zhidong. Also in 1902 the first private normal school was founded and the Imperial University Normal Institute to train teachers.

After being battered by several wars which interfered with the country's teacher education development, the birth of China in 1949 brought back the urgent push to re-establish it. In August 1951, the First National Meeting on Teacher Education called for reestablishing the district system for normal schools (Wang in Li, 2006 : 26). China relied on normal schools, colleges and universities for the mass training of teachers of all levels. By 1953, there were a total of 31 independent normal universities/colleges nationwide (China National Institute for Educational Research, in Li, 2006:27).

The Communist Party and the government always pay great attention to teacher education and have it on top of their agenda" . Emphasis is further placed on the importance Chinese government places on teacher education which was reported by Chinese Embassy (2004) thus:

> Teacher education is an important part of Chinese socialist education system. In the last 50years ' of development since the founding of the People 's Republic of China, the governments at different levels have given priorities and great care to teacher education. China has established on the whole a teacher education system that meets the needs of basic education of different types and at different levels. This system fits the specific Chinese situation and consists of independent teacher training institutions as the principle parts supplemented by other educational organizations. (p. 1)

China has at present the largest system of basic education and the largest teacher work force in the world. The teacher education system plays a critical role in preparing an enormous army of qualified teachers for the basic education system (Li, 2006). Research gives a developmental growth of teacher education in China like The Fourth National Conference on Teacher Education in 1980 where targets and tasks of the past thirty years of teacher education in the new era were defined, 1985

brought about the reform of educational system which pointed to development of teacher education and training for in-service teachers and the status was much promoted to a higher level. By 1993 the Outline for Reform and Development of Education in China emphasized that governments at all levels should increase their financial input to improve teacher education. Chinese Education and Research Network (1998-2013) reported thus:

> The 5th National Meeting of Teacher Education held in 1996 pointed out, " teacher education should be regarded as the strategic priority for the development of education. Governments are responsible for a better teacher education system. Governments at all levels should take teacher education as a great undertaking for centuries to come that is beneficial for society and future generations. (n.d.)

The current provisions for teacher education is being achieved through regular teacher education institutions, among these are six major regular forms, such as normal universities/colleges, normal professional colleges, normal schools, provincial colleges of education, regional colleges of education and local teacher schools (Li, 2006).

Educational System

Education is one of the crucial topics raised by people of different calibers locally and internationally. In most fora and organizations of academics, industrialists, politicians, parents, religious leaders and bureaucrats, education comes to bear as it has the potential of changing people, nations and the world.

Nigeria's Educational System

Nigerian educational system for some years has been 6-3-3-4. It was modified by 2009 and followed the pattern of 9-3-4. However, of recent attempt is being made to go back to the old system of 6-3-3-4 with a minor modification. The 9-3-4 system was done with the view to including the components of basic, technical and vocational inputs into the curriculum, as pupils were expected to complete the first

nine years before proceeding on a career path in the next three years of secondary education (Awoyinfa, 2013). This literally means six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three of senior and four years of university or polytechnic or college of education. The first 9 years of education is compulsory for children from the age of 6; that is, 6 years in the primary level and 3 years of junior secondary school. Children have the choice of proceeding to the senior secondary or opting for vocational training after which they decide on which of the tertiary institutions to attend according to their academic performance. From the fore goings, it should be noted that each country's educational system is unique. This is supported by Cooley's(2011) submission that the differences of education systems in the United States, China, Japan and Australia have created testable strengths and weaknesses. No country has found a perfect balance but each system has evolved to create workers suited to its respective nation.

Nigeria like other countries, has trained teachers expected to suit each level of education. National Policy on Education (2013, section 5B: 92) said that no education system of a nation may rise above the quality of its teachers, therefore, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. Lassa (2000 in Olakulehin, 2007) crystallized that the importance of teachers and the roles that they play in the education process is central to education, particularly in third world countries. However, the challenge of teacher training appears to be the most daunting challenge facing the education system in general in Nigeria. This is why teacher education in Nigeria is given a high priority as stated in Section 5B, item 96 (NPE, 2013). It stated that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in the methods and curriculum and teachers be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. By implication therefore, it means that teachers shall be trained before commencement of their job and while on it (that is, in-service training). Adeosun (2009) highlighted the detail specifications of the different training institutions in Nigeria as given below:

Faculties/lnstitutes of Education of Universities: train teachers for secondary (high)schools by offering Bachelor of Education degree program to both senior secondary school graduates and senior secondary school teachers who already have

National Certificate in Education (NCE) qualifications. They also offer Master's and Doctorate degree programmes in education. Colleges of Education: offer postsecondary NCE training programmes, i.e. train teachers for primary and junior secondary schools (basic education). The NCE is the minimum qualification for primary school teaching since 1998. Some of the colleges of education also offer NCE pre-primary courses in order to produce teachers for the pre-primary level of education. The NCE represents a classic design of teacher education in Nigeria (Pp. 103-4).

3.2. China's Educational System

Before the People's Republic of China was founded, nearly 80% of the 500 million people living in China were illiterate. During Mao Zedong's rule, education became one of the government's chief priorities and experienced great change during the Cultural Revolution (Admin.2009).This has however seen enormous drastic development as the decades passed by. Pang and Richey (2006) posited that the regular education in China has a long and thriving history. Influenced by the Confucian's theory, education is more honored than any other vocational training in young children and young adults. These they further elaborate on the May 1985 National Conference on Education (Education in the People's Republic of China, 2005) which brought a milestone in China's education as it is said to have recognized five fundamental areas for reform which was connected with implementing the Party Central Committee's Draft Decision on Reforming the Education System. Education in China is a state-owned system of public education run by the Ministry of Education. All citizens must attend school for at least nine years. The government provides primary education for six years, starting at age six or seven, followed by six years of secondary education for ages 12 to 18 (ChinaTravelDepot.com 2007-2013). Again, Pang and Richey (2006) give a detailed breakdown of China educational specifications thus:

> *Normally, there are five or six years of primary school education, six years high school education (which is divided into two parts: three-year junior*

high and three-year senior high school education), and higher education, which is provided by universities, colleges and institutes (it offers four- or five-year undergraduate programs as well as special two-or three year programs. Students who have completed a first degree may apply to enter graduate schools). Besides, in order to provide for its population in mainland China, there are other vast and varied school systems available. For example, in addition to the regular primary, secondary, and higher education, there are preschools, kindergartens, schools for the deaf and blind, key schools (similar to college preparatory schools), secondary agricultural and vocational schools, secondary teachers' schools, secondary technical schools, and secondary professional schools, and various institutions of higher learning (besides regular colleges and universities, there are professional colleges, and short-term vocational universities). (p.77)

Teacher Education Development and Challenges

Teacher Education Development and Challenges in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education of Nigeria (2013: Section 5B: 93a-e) stipulates that the goals of teacher education shall be to:

produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the education system; encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers; help teachers to fit into social life of community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and, enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (p.28).

Teacher quality is understood to be the greatest predictor of academic success; it therefore follows that teacher professional development can improve classroom instruction and students' achievements. Teacher competence is also defined by the level of knowledge they possess (Estes in Oduolowu, 2009). The same author

further submitted that people now begin to realize that the teacher occupies a paramount position in the teaching-learning situation, and that ultimately, the success of any educational system depends largely on the quality of the teachers. A new reality in schools in Nigeria is the fact that the quality of education weighs heavily on the teachers, the major stakeholders of education. The quantity and quality of teachers produced in Nigeria over the years fell far short of national expectations (Oduolowu, 2009).

Osunde and Omoruyi (2004) supported this by explaining why teachers are regarded as the most important element in the school system. As stated in NPE (2013) , "no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers". Hence training is often organized for teachers to upgrade and update their knowledge and skills. Osunde and Omoruyi further cited other authors like Oyitso, (1997); Nwanchukwu, (1990) and elucidated that training is conceived as an organized procedure by which people learn and acquire knowledge and skills for a definite purpose. They also see training as the process of increasing human efficiency through which people are offered the opportunity to acquire new skills and current knowledge required in carrying out various specialized tasks in their places of work. Again, training and retraining are necessary if efficiency and profits are to be attained. When people are offered training, they acquire new and improved skills and knowledge that will enable them perform better thereby enhancing their level of productivity.

Since the early 1980s, the Nigerian education system has witnessed an unprecedented increase in population. The major challenge that has continued to agitate the minds of educational planners, administrators and the government has been how best to cope with the increasing population of students as well as provide well-qualified teaching personnel that would help empower individual students through the acquisition of knowledge and skills and would enable them to participate fully and actively in nation building (Imhabekhai, 1999/2000).

However, it should be noted that despite the provision of different levels of teacher training avenues, Adeosun (2009) states that teacher training institutions have come under heavy criticism for poor quality of teachers produced. This is also

supported by other researchers like Oyetunde and Muodumogu (1999); Ajeyalemi (2005); Iyamu (2005) and Akinsolu (2010).

Further research like that of Oduolowu (2009) specified that teacher education faces problems as a result of the societal attitude toward teachers. In Nigeria the teaching profession is not respected. Teachers are no longer valued as those who contribute greatly to national development. The same author further gave insight that the profession is not lucrative as a result of many impediments such as low pay, long hours of hard work, uncertain success, etc. Even some of those who are professional teachers prefer to join other professions. In fact every failed job applicant in Nigeria resorts to teaching while waiting for "gainful employment". The scenario is such that just about anybody could teach.

Teacher Education Development and Challenges in China

Although China has a long tradition of respecting teachers and attaching importance to education prior to the 1890s, there was no real training system for the teaching profession. Similar to the polity and economy, Chinese education system is structured as a centralized sector. Teacher education is also embedded within this centralized system (Li, 2006). Teacher education, like other fields, was highly interwoven with politics while its other functions were largely neglected. Because of this, teacher education was fundamentally weakened and even destroyed in many places during the ten-year Great Culture Revolution (1966-1976). Political ideological movements and struggles hampered the whole system of teacher education, and student recruitment and enrolment ceased for several years. In addition, teachers' socio-political status declined overall. Teachers were criticized as " little bourgeois," and were " under great strain and many of them suffered considerable mental and, often, physical abuse" (Guo in Li, 2006).

Yang and Wu (1999) revealed that to mark the 100th year anniversary of the introduction of modern teacher education into China, and prepare for the opportunities and challenges in the new century, the State Education Commission convened a large-scale conference on teacher education and training in 1996.The conference suggested that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers

and the standards of today's teacher education are the standards of tomorrow's overall education. The conference, they said, should aim to:

implement the all-round national policies on education, adhere to the socialist principle of education, enhance all reforms in teacher education and improve its quality and effectiveness; promote the overall standards for teacher education, meet the demands for teachers both in quality and quantity; build up a teacher education system with Chinese socialist characters which embodies the ideology of life-long education, and gradually modernize teacher education (State Education Commission cited in Yang & Wu, 1999, p. 160).

Additionally, the same authors explained further that since 1978, the development of teachers has been the focal point of education in China. The government and the public have realized that people with high learning and professional skill are demanded in the ever increasing competitive world, where science and technology are advancing at a rapid pace. Despite the considerable efforts of the government towards the teacher education curriculum, there are still some negative dispositions by the public just like the case in Nigeria. Many high school graduates did not want to be teachers, so they went to other universities instead of the normal universities and teacher colleges. The primary reason for the lack of interest in teaching was the low social status and living conditions of teachers. Thus normal universities and teacher colleges were unable to recruit excellent students (Zhou & Reed, 2005). The hierarchical teacher education structure corresponded to the public school system that was viewed to be a stratified structure in terms of disciplinary knowledge. Teachers, the important roles in the school system were thought to meet different levels of disciplinary knowledge, which meant that elementary school teachers finished the normal school education equivalent to senior high schools in terms of disciplinary knowledge, junior high school teachers graduated from two or three-year teacher colleges or three-year programs at some normal universities, and senior high school teachers needed to achieve bachelor degrees in a discipline (Zhu & Han 2006).

Contextual Comparisons of Nigeria and China

Nigeria and China are both tagged as developing nations in Africa and Asia. Review has shown that the two countries have invested much in teacher education; it has proved to be a continuous procedure in both countries. Also, both agree that the quality of education in any country depends on the quality of teachers produced and priority has to be given to teacher education (FRN, 2013; Paine & Fang, 2007).

The advent of education in Nigeria as provided by the review above was mostly based on religious purposes, to facilitate works of missionaries as shown in the related literature. However the Chinese system, also shown in the literature, was established for political purposes. The prosperity of the Qing Empire had waned steadily during the early 19th century, and continued to decline afterwards due to serious internal problems such as bad harvests, natural disasters, overpopulation, administrative corruption, social unrest, and the increasing power of foreign imperialism (Li, 2006). China also portrays the fact that its reform on teacher education has taken the modern path in recent years, This, Paine and Fang (2007) highlight thus:

> ... in fact, a common justification found in each policy argument for the reform of teachers and teaching is a modernist one, reflecting visions of a modern, technologically driven society, where investments in human capital are considered crucial to economic development. Teachers and teacher education become the "machine tool' (muji)for the nation. (p.281)

Researches have shown that despite investment of both countries, there are so many challenges still bedeviling the system as highlighted in the review, like acute shortage of qualified teachers despite the available teacher training institutions, most especially in the rural areas, the status of the teaching profession, quality of teachers produced, provision for training and re-training teachers for the enhancement of the education sector, infrastructure, instructional materials, funding and the growth of each nation (Zhou & Reed, 2005; Oduolowo, 2009). It is further emphasized that the two major problems since independence in Nigeria have been low output of teachers and poor quality of the teachers produced. Till date, these problems persist and have even worsened as many unqualified personnel find their way into the profession thereby rubbishing whatever efforts the authority claimed they are making to

improve the sector (Nasiru, 2013). The same situation applies to China where the demands for new teachers are still growing and large numbers of in service because of the need for further training or retraining to gain qualifications (Yang &Wu, 1999). This was further posited by Ogundele and Olaniyi (2013) that, ' Despite all efforts put in place towards improving the qualities and standard of teachers' education programmes in Nigeria, many teachers are still found wanting as far as standard is concerned". Bao (2012) submitted the state of teachers' quality in China thus, "The teacher qualifications structure is irrational. The overall quality of teachers is still not high in the remote areas, especially in the rural areas of central and western China" . He further gave an idea into the current plans of the Chinese government to continue the re-training of teachers especially those at the primary and secondary levels "in order to enhance the overall quality and professionalism of teachers from primary and secondary schools, the Chinese government made a plan of training all the teachers every five years: From 2011 to 2015, more than 10 million teachers should be trained at least 360 hours in 5 years".

Ogundele and Olaniyi (2013) suggested that if the Nigerian government wishes to accept education as the only instrumental for national transformation and socioeconomic development, there is the need to restructure teachers' education program beginning from the basics and to the provision of separate schools according to the various disciplines like education, science, technology and others. China on the other hand has made greater progress by the numerous institutions provided according to disciplines. In this paper, the review showed that normal schools (universities) and other related organizations are meant to launch into distance education and teacher education program supported by the Chinese Ministry of education (Bao, 2012).

6. Conclusion/ Recommendations

The submission here is that teachers are largely responsible for the translation and interpretation of educational policies, curriculum or course offerings, instructional material packages and assessment of learning outcome at the level of learners. The fact that 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 (Ogunyinka, Emmanuel & Kayode, 2015). Many observers of education also emphasized the fact that improvement in education is best achieved through improving the quality of teachers. This no doubt depends to a large extent on the professional preparation of the teachers. Teachers worldwide have been recognized as a key enabling factor in improving the quality of education.

Therefore, the following recommendations are proffered: it is pertinent that teachers should have a good mastery of their various subjects and also have command over a wide range of variety of teaching methods and strategies as well as understanding of the learning process of students; most especially with the critical shift in education which emphasizes learners' active engagement.

The teacher education programme should be designed in such a way that individuals are drawn to it from intrinsic motivation with specific requirements on quality and quantity of teachers needed even for the future. Furthermore, teachers should be trained to increase the supply of manpower in the areas of needs. Thus, Ogunyinka et al., (2015) posit that an alternative teacher education programme should be created. Their main purpose is to increase the supply of teachers in areas of need, geographical, or relative to a particular subject (IT, languages, mathematics, among others).

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