Higher Education and the Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria: A Management Perspective

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Abstract

This study examined the appropriateness of teacher education curriculum to basic and senior secondary education as well as the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria. Using stratified sampling technique, 52 lecturers from two colleges of Education and a Faculty of Education in a university participated in the study. An instrument entitled "Teacher Education Curriculum Appropriateness, Challenges and Management Questionnaire"(TECACMQ) was designed and validated by four lecturers in Education. The TECACMQ was trial-tested with reliability coefficient of 0.85. Three research questions were answered with frequency counts, percentage and rank ordering. The findings indicated appropriateness of teacher education curriculum to both basic and senior secondary (SS) education (52.38 - 80.95%) except in Technology and Trade/Entrepreneurial subjects at the SS level with 42.86% and 9.52%, respectively. The number of colleges of Education and faculties of education are adequate to produce enough teachers but there is a gap between supply and demand of teachers in the various subjects. The main panacea to this gap is adequate planning to produce appropriate quantity and quality of teachers well spread to adequately cover the scope of the curricula at all levels, towards meeting the demand for comprehensive education in Nigeria.

Introduction

Higher educational institutions are set up for the education of the youth towards gainful employment, conduct of researches and provision of service to local, national as well as international communities. Nigeria has a strong faith in education as an institution for development and for higher education as a tool for the development of highly skilled human capital that would engineer and sustain socio-economic improvements (Babalola and Atinmo, 2009). This belief is clearly indicated in the goals of higher education enumerated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education. These goals include, among others, contribution to national development through high level manpower training; acquiring both physical and intellectual skills for self reliance as well as promotion and encouragement of scholarship, national and international understanding and interaction.

Higher education is provided at colleges of education, universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology. Colleges of education and universities offer programmes leading to the award of Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) and Bachelor Degrees in Arts and Social Sciences, Science Education and in professional programmes like Educational Management, Counselling, Primary Education Studies etc (B.A. /B.Sc. Ed B. Ed), respectively. Higher education has throughout its history been confronted by challenges in the internal and external environments of its functioning (Brennan, Hirsch and Weber, 1999). According to

Mkhonto (2009), the nature of these challenges has necessitated the adaptation and responsiveness of the organizational character and curriculum offerings of higher educational institutions.

The primary focus of teacher training institutions is teacher production towards quality education at all levels. The specific goals of teacher education are to:

a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the 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, p.33).

One of the major concerns of teacher education is getting people of the right calibre and intelligence to be interested in teaching and opting for it. In addition, getting the materials and equipment needed to effectively train these teachers, rather than produce half-baked graduates (Ajayi, 2004). An equally important policy issue is the ratio of teacher production, specifically the low production of the much needed Science and Technology teachers. The teacher training institutions might be producing the right number but probably a wrong mix of teachers needed for the system. Moreover, about 35 elective subjects are recommended for Senior Secondary School Curriculum with very few specialist teachers (where available at all) to handle them. The 35 trade/entrepreneurship subjects include, among others, Auto Body Repair and Spray Painting; Auto Electric Work; Auto Mechanical Work; Air conditioning Refrigerator; Welding and fabrication, Engineering and Craft Practice; Radio, TV and electrical work; Block laying, Brick laying and concrete work; Plumbing and pipe fitting; Carpentry and joinery; Catering, Garment making, Dyeing and bleaching; Cosmetology and Leather Goods Manufacturing and Repairs. Other subjects include Keyboarding; Shorthand; Data processing; Store Keeping; GSM maintenance; Photography; Tourism; Mining; Animal Husbandry; Fisheries; Marketing and Salesmanship (FRN,2008). These subjects have been infused into existing subjects in the curriculum.

The primary goal of curriculum development at any level of education has to do with the acquisition and transmission of reliable knowledge. Curriculum is viewed as a social construction where the process of decision-making is seen as a socio-political and cultural process (Goodson, 2002 and Karseth, 2002). Curriculum, according to Cheserek (2011), is an organized programme of study for a given degree, diploma or certificate award, incorporating all matters such as academic staff requirements, duration of academic programme, admission requirements, content requirements and assessment process requirements. Curriculum can then be summarized as an embodiment of the aspirations of any nation for its citizens; a vision endeavoured to be realized through educational processes

Management of educational curriculum involves many activities that may run concurrently. These activities, according to Ganguly (2001), include spelling out curriculum contents; training and re-training of teachers; and curriculum delivery and transaction. Other activities are providing learning materials for teachers and students; measuring learning outcomes; and use of ICTs. Teacher education curriculum determines to a large extent, the quality of the products, hence the need for the management of teacher education process as a basis for quality teachers capable of bringing about the achievement of educational goals.

Management of teacher education becomes imperative because of the diverse demands made on teacher education programme. For instance, teacher education must meet the demands for teachers of the various subjects at all levels of the educational system- Physics, Chemistry, Geography, Languages, etc., in the right quantity and quality. Of great importance is the knowledge of subject matter as well as the methods of delivery for effective teaching in schools. Apart from that, teacher education curriculum must also provide for attitude training of neophyte teachers so that they would be able to develop the right character in their own students. In addition, the practical aspect referred to as Teaching Practice requires adequate planning, implementation and monitoring in order to develop the necessary teaching skills in the student-teachers (Alabi, 2000a; Ijaiya, 2008). All these call for adequate management of the curriculum and that includes setting appropriate goals and objectives, organization, proper coordination, monitoring, and evaluation coupled with feedbacks. Furthermore, the curriculum must be accompanied by adequate resources- lecturers, funding, instructional resources and facilities. Curriculum management should culminate into quality instructional delivery that promotes critical thinking with high level learning such as understanding, application, analysis and synthesis instead of simple recall and memorization (Ijaiya, Alabi and Fasasi, 2010). In managing teacher education curriculum, challenges could be in the area of planning (providing adequate manpower, databases, finances/funding etc.) as well as its implementation and monitoring of the mounted educational programmes, culminating in production of quality teachers for effective lesson delivery and attainment of educational goals and objectives. There is thus the need to re-examine the curriculum content of teacher education programme vis-a-vis the clear evidence of poor management of teacher education in the country, towards meeting the needs of the lower levels of education. However, considering the continuous expansion and complexity of higher educational institutions, the more important focus is the management of the curriculum in terms of content as well as the pedagogy. Curriculum management becomes imperative in view of the fact that curriculum making is not a linear process. Changes at one level have consequences for other levels which go beyond those that are intended.

Problem Statement

Teachers are the most important facilitators of effective teaching. Where they are in short supply, it becomes a problem. The colleges of education and the faculties of education in universities are the two tertiary outfits for teacher production. Hence, their curriculum is germane to the quality of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. In spite of the National Commission of Colleges of Education (NCCE) and National Universities Commission (NUC)'s guidelines, there appears to be conflicts and confusion in curricula of teacher education in the country. For instance, there is confusion in teacher production between basic education and senior secondary education. In Kwara state, two Colleges of Education have been converted to only basic teachers' production institutions with emphasis on Early Childhood Education (ECE). Hence, Physics, Chemistry and Biology have been replaced with the amalgamated Integrated Science, and Social Studies replacing Geography, History and Government.

There is clear evidence of poor management of teacher education in Nigeria. There is planlessness with regards to teachers needed. Admission is done without reference to the needs of the programme. Furthermore, there is apparent lack of coordination between the two teacher production outfits- colleges of education and faculties of education. Even with the policy on basic education the government has not changed its

procedures regarding preparation for relevant teachers. It is therefore considered important to investigate the challenges posed by the demands on the teacher education curriculum as a means of managing teacher production process.

The specific problems addressed by this study related to examining:

i) The appropriateness of teacher education curriculum with the content of basic and senior secondary education.

ii) The challenges of teacher production.

iii) The management of teacher production process.

Research Objectives

This study was designed with the aim of:

i) Investigating level of alignment in the teacher education curriculum with the contents of basic and senior secondary education levels.

ii) Identifying the challenges in the teacher production process

iii) Suggesting measures for effective management of teacher education process.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is the scope of teacher education curriculum meeting the demand of basic education in Nigeria?
2. Is the scope of teacher education curriculum meeting the demand of senior secondary education?
3. What are the management challenges confronting teacher production in Nigerian higher education?

Methodology

Research Design

A descriptive survey method was used to collect data on the scope of teacher education curriculum as well as the challenges and management of teacher education process. The design was appropriate for data collection with the use of a questionnaire (TECACMQ) and secondary data from reports by Kwara State Ministry of Education and Technology. Data were collected based on the curricula content of the higher teacher educational institutions and teacher mix in the basic and senior secondary schools in Kwara state.

Population and Samples

The target population was all lecturers of three colleges of education and faculty of education of the federal university in Kwara state. From this population, 52 lecturers from two Colleges of Education and the Faculty of Education in the Federal University (21 lecturers from the university and 31 from the two colleges) were selected as participants. The study used a combination of purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Stratification was on the basis of the levels of teacher educational institutions – universities and colleges of education. One out of the existing two universities and two out of three colleges of education in the state were selected as samples. Purposive sampling technique was used to select senior lecturers and above in the institutions as participants.

Research Instruments

The major instrument used for data collection were inventories on (i) student enrolment in the different disciplines (ii) contents of the teacher education curricula (iii) content of basic and senior secondary school curricula. A questionnaire entitled "Teacher Education Curriculum Appropriateness, Challenges and Management Questionnaire" (TECACMQ) was designed to collect data from lecturers in colleges of education and faculty of education in the university on curriculum, challenges and management of teacher education processes. The questionnaire had 15 items on the appropriateness of teacher education curriculum to basic and senior secondary school education with Yes/No options scored 1 and 0, respectively. It also had two sections for participants to list the

challenges and measures of managing teacher education programmes towards effectiveness. In addition, secondary data were collected on teacher-pupil ratios in basic and senior secondary schools from Kwara State School Census Reports. The TECACMQ was validated by four lecturers at the Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. Its reliability was ascertained through a test-retest method using 10 lecturers from Kwara State University, Molete, within a three-week interval. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained with the use of Pearson product moment correlation statistic.

Procedure for Data collection

Data for the study were collected from records and curricular contents at the teacher education institutions as well as Kwara State Ministry of Education and Kwara State Teaching Service commission for the Basic and Senior Secondary schools using inventories and their publications. The TECACMQ was used to collect data on Curriculum appropriateness, challenges and possible management of teacher education process.

Data Analysis

The data collected from records and lecturers from the teacher training institutions were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage and rank ordering to answer the research questions.

Results

Research Question 1: Is the scope of teacher education curriculum appropriate for the demand of basic education in Nigeria?

Table 1: Lecturers' Perception of Appropriateness of College of education Curriculum Content to Basic Education (Lower, Middle and Upper Basic) (N=31 for 1 & 2; N=21 for 3)

S/No	Basic Level	Frequency(No of Respondents)	% Appropriateness
1.	Lower Basic Level (Pry 1-3)	25	80.65
2.	Middle Basic Level (Pry 4-6)	21	67.74
3.	Upper Basic Level (JSS1-3)	13	61.90

Research Question 2: Is the scope of teacher education curriculum appropriate for the demand of senior secondary education in Nigeria?

Table 2: Lecturers' Perception of Appropriateness of Faculty of Education Curriculum Content to Senior Secondary Education. (N=21)

S/No	Subjects	Frequency (No of Respondents)	% Appropriateness
1.	Humanities (Languages, Religions, Arts)	17	80.95
2.	Business Studies	15	71.43
3.	Sciences and Mathematics	11	52.38
4.	Technology	9	42.86
5.	Trade/Entrepreneurship Subjects (Infused into relevant contents of the curriculum)	2	9.52

Research Question 3: What are the management challenges confronting teacher education in Nigerian higher education?

Table 3: Rank ordering of Teacher production challenges in Higher Education

	Challenges	Frequency	Percentage	Rank Order
1	Unsuitable policy	21	40.38	8th
2	Inadequate funding	39	75.00	1st
3	Inappropriate pedagogy	31	59.62	5th
4	Poor critical thinking skills	27	51.92	6th
5	Poor ICT skills	32	61.54	2nd
6	Inadequate Practical Teaching (Duration and Supervision)	32	61.54	2nd
7	Low ability students intakes	26	50.00	7th
8	Inadequate facilities	32	61.54	2nd

Discussion of Results

Results in Tables 1and 2 indicate perceived appropriateness of teacher education curriculum to both basic and senior secondary (SS) education (between 52.38 and 80. 95%) except in Technology and Trade/Entrepreneurial subjects at the SS level with 42.86% and 9.52%, respectively. These results imply that the curricular contents of teacher education are generally acceptable except in the scientific and vocational areas that require more qualified teachers to handle them. As submitted by the Federal Ministry of Education (2011), the dearth of teachers is very critical for various trades and entrepreneurial education. In the opinion of Ajayi (2004), new syllabuses are imposed on teachers who are ill- prepared to handle them. In addition to other societal problems, overall management problem of planning and implementation has been identified as the bane of science and technical education in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2004).

Table 3 gives some of the challenges confronting teacher production in higher education in Nigeria. Funding inadequacy ranked first, followed by inadequate facilities, inadequate practical teaching and poor ICT skills. Inappropriate pedagogy ranked 5th while poor critical thinking skills, low ability students intakes and unstable teacher education policy ranked 6th, 7th and 8th, respectively. Funding is very crucial to procurement of necessary resources such as competent personnel, physical and material facilities towards quality products (Alabi, 2000b). With adequacy of funds and facilities, it is likely that necessary activities such as staff development programmes, supervision and other management functions can be incorporated into teacher education programme (Alabi, 2005; Ijaiya, 1998). Development of critical thinking skills emphasises acquisition of higher ranking knowledge of understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation rather than mere recall and memorisation. These skills were found to be lacking in products of teacher training institutions (Ijaiya, Alabi and Fasasi, 2010).

Recommendations

Every aspect of the education process requires management for effectiveness. Teacher education process would benefit tremendously from the following management measures:

The managers of teacher education must recognise the balance between needs and production. Adequate planning is required and must include balance between production and demand for teachers in the various subjects. This measure is to correct the overblown production of teachers in the commercial subjects at the detriment of languages, sciences and technology.

With regards to provision of teaching facilities, there is the need for planning in relation to the needs. For instance, there is the need to have a well- equipped centre of Educational Technology in each teacher education institution towards meeting the global challenges of technological knowledge and development.

Admission should be with reference to the needs of the nation. There is also the need to raise the admission requirements into teacher education programmes especially at the colleges of education. A minimum of five credits including English Language would ensure that candidates with minimum of average academic ability are admitted with expectedly competent and committed products.

Coordination is necessary among colleges of education and faculties of education in the production of teachers with emphasis on areas of needs. The number of colleges of education must be aligned in terms of the quantity and quality of teachers to be produced.

Monitoring of the teacher production is essential and must include the areas where subject teachers are produced.

Evaluation of the entire process is necessary. From time to time, National Universities Commission and National Council for Colleges of Education must carry out periodic assessment of the inputs, process and outputs of teacher education programme, with the feedback ploughed back into the system for improvement.

Funding of teacher education must be related to demand. Governments should provide proper funding. The funding should focus not only on teaching aspect but also research and publication in teacher education programmes. Funding should also be a joint venture among governments, private individuals and international agencies. The policy of giving federal government scholarships/bursary to education students in the 1970s and 1980s may need to be resuscitated. This step might be a form of incentive to get qualified candidates to train as teachers.

Curriculum design for teacher education programmes needs to have inputs by all the stakeholders in the education system (parents, experienced teachers and supervisors, economic enterprises etc). This step would allow the design of teacher education programme contents that would effectively cope with diverse challenges.

Traditional methods of teaching and learning cannot bring about the quality products desired for teaching in our schools. Lecture method considered appropriate for higher institutions is unsuitable for teacher training. There is the need for student-centered approach for application at the basic and senior secondary levels.

The teaching practice is a very crucial aspect of teacher education. There is therefore the need for ensuring adequate duration and suitable supervision of the programme. As planned Federal Government of Nigeria (2008), in the National Teacher Education Policy, one continuous year of teaching practice experience is recommended. However, as recommended by Alabi and Owolabi (2012), the proposed increased duration should be matched with adequate plans to ensure that teacher trainees gain more useful experiences from the exercise. Another important management measure is inculcation of critical/ innovative thinking. This could be developed through examination questions based on high level thinking such as analysis and synthesis as against questions requiring simple recall and understanding.

Conclusion

Efforts have been made in this study to examine the process of teacher education

programme in Nigeria. It is concluded that there are some challenges relating to policy, funding and pedagogy. Suggestions have been made on how to manage these challenges with emphasis on planning, implementation and monitoring of teacher education process towards production of quality teachers who will meet the needs of learners at all levels of Nigeria education.

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