

Strategies for Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria and the Role of Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN)

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Abstract : In Nigeria, majority of lecturers and teachers in the educational system do not possess the right teaching academic qualification (NCE) not to even talk of the professional standard (TRCN). The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN, 2010), advocates that teaching just like other professions now requires that only those who are adequately prepared and regulated should be entrusted with the teaching-learning process. Hence, there is a need for teacher professionalism in order to enhance the role of teachers in the formulation and implementation of educational policies in Nigeria. This paper focuses on teaching as a profession in Nigeria, in line with the 2013 National Policy on Education (NPE) and TRCN's role. The paper discussed various strategies to foster the full professionalization of teaching profession in Nigeria. With emphasis on the role of the Federal Government, Teachers organization, and TRCN. The study also revealed the challenges looming teaching profession in Nigeria. The paper is concluded with the recommendations for implementation of professionalization of teaching in Nigeria.

Keywords: Professionalism, teaching, TRCN, NPE, Nigeria, and Education

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I. Introduction

Education has being regarded as a pre-requisite for personal, societal development national development in various countries of the world. Also, it is in view of the indispensable role of education in development of man and modern society that various declarations on education have been made at the global level and in Nigeria (Adegbemile, 2011). Teaching is a noble and respectable profession in the developed countries of the world, despite the accosted issues regarding teacher's welfare in Nigeria. It is often described as the mother of all professions. Hence, law, engineering, pharmacy, nursing, medicine are the 'end products' of teaching profession. In Nigeria, majority of lecturers and teachers in the educational system do not possess the right teaching academic qualification (National Certificate of Education) not to even talk of the professional standard (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria). The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (2010), advocates that teaching just like other professions now requires that only those who are adequately prepared and regulated should be entrusted with the teaching- learning process. In concomitant with the said statement, Otolumefor (2011) revealed that many teachers in our educational institutions could not justify their degrees in the classrooms, because most of them did not merit the job. Based on this statement one can confidently say that whatever the influences of the teacher would be on the system of education, it can only be determined by the teacher's quality, teacher's quantity and teacher's value (Abodunrin&Ogundore, 1996). It is of great concern that teaching in Nigeria has not really assumed professional status like other professions such as legal, medical and other allied. It appears that teaching profession in Nigeria has been regarded as a dumping ground for people who desire to have a temporary job while they seek other jobs of their dreams (Wokoha, 2014). It will not be out of place to nexus the problem of the poor academic performance of students to the unprofessionalism of the teachers. It is on this vein that stated that this scenario calls for teacher professionalism in order to enhance the role of teachers in the formulation and implement

Teaching As A Concept

Teaching has been described by various scholars; Oladosu (2004) sees teaching as an activity that is aimed at bringing about eloquent learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable. He also explained further, that teaching involves a teacher, a learner, and content in form of knowledge, facts, information and a skill to be imparted. Also, Ehindero (2006) perceives teaching as a nomadic interactive human process involving complex decision making on different aspects of classroom collaboration. According to Wokoha (2014), the retailers (teacher), has a product (packaged knowledge) to "sell" to an active, critically minded "buyer" (students), to sell the knowledge or message call it concept, generalization, principles or laws embedded in the different disciplines of the school curriculum. The teacher has to package

the product and make it attractive to the learner. These, he believes are pre-requisites for effective teaching. Aladejana (2006) is of the opinion that teaching is interpreted in its broadest sense that should include academic guidance and intellectual motivation as well as classroom, laboratory and school library media resource centres to foster learning outcome. Also, Ozano (2013) views teaching as an organized presentation of facts, ideas, skills and techniques to students. It also involves the sharing of knowledge in the process of developing the learner.

II. Categorization of Teachers in Nigeria

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria has basically categorized teachers into four major groups as provided by Act 31 of 1993 section 2:

Category A (Doctoral Teachers)

Holders of Ph.D. in Education or Ph.D. in other field plus teaching qualification e.g. Postgraduate diploma in Education (PGDE); Professional Diploma in Education (PDE); Nigeria certificate in Education (NCE)

Category B (Master Teachers)

Holders of Master Degree in Education or Master Degree in other fields plus a teaching qualification, e.g. PGDE, PDE, NCE

Category C (Graduate Teachers)

Holders of Bachelor Degree in Education or Bachelor Degree in other field plus a teaching qualification, e.g. PGDE, PDE, NCE.

Category D (NCE Teachers)

Holders of the Nigerian certificate in Education which is the national minimum teaching qualification. In deed this classification/categorization is a legal requirement for professionalism and therefore places demands on teachers to constantly update themselves in academic qualifications as indispensable instrument for professional growth and development.

III. Concept of Professionalism

In defining the concept of profession, Yusuf, Afolabi, & Oyetayo (2014) defines profession as an occupation or vocation that requires special skills, knowledge of some department of learning and qualification to especially one with high social status. It is a job that requires special skills or knowledge through special training with a high level of education; and it utilizes functional education and mental ability rather than manual or physical labour. According to Dada & Fadokun (2010), a profession entails an occupation that is dependent upon specialized intellectual study and training for the provision of skilled service to other member of society; government, non-governmental agencies for a definite fee or salary. Orubite (2010) posits that a profession is a paid job that requires prolonged training and liberal or formal educational qualification. TRCN (2005), attests that professionalism guarantees that ethics are imbibed, the rules of the game exist and are obeyed by all, clients get value for their money and efforts, public interest is protected, priority is given to nation building, and above all that the professionals are regarded with dignity and awe. The profession of law, medicine, Engineering, pharmacy, among others realized these secrets early enough and fully exploited them. NTI (2007) defined profession as any occupation which demands of all who work in it a prolonged and specialized knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for providing a particular service in the community.

Adesina (2005) viewed that professionalization refers to building into teaching career some control device to ensure that the practitioners are worthy members of the profession Okunloye (2005) defined a profession as a symbol for a desired conception of one's work and by extension of one's self (the worker). Oyekan (2000), defined professionalization as a process involving improvement in the status and practice of the occupation as the practitioner continually upgrades the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective and efficient professional practice.

IV. The Teaching Profession in Nigeria

From inception, to teach in primary school in Nigeria, a person needed a Teacher Certificate Grade II (TC GD II) from four years of secondary school as a Grade II Teacher - Training College. These were phased out after 1998, when the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) became the required diploma for all primary and junior secondary school teachers. In 1996, out of about 420,000 primary school teachers in the country

about 80 percent had either NCE or TC GD II. In 1978, the Government created the National Teachers Institute (NTI) to conduct programmes that would upgrade teacher qualifications to the NCE level, with most of this training carried out by distance learning. Between 1993 and 1996, the NTI graduated 34,486 in their NCE distance learning programme. In 2000, it trained 20,000 teachers; A Bachelor of Education programme with NTI received approval by the government at the end of 2000. NTI also conducts workshops and conferences on curriculum development and other areas of teacher training (Ozano, 2013).

According to Atipioko, Ajuar and Omoraka (1997) for one to be able to teach in senior secondary schools in Nigeria, he/she must have either a bachelor's degree in education or a bachelor's degree in a subject field combined with a post graduate diploma in education. At the senior secondary level, all staff is qualified as all possess the bachelor's degree. The bachelor's degrees in education are offered at major universities. Of the 63 colleges of education in the country offering the three year NCE programme, about a third are owned by the Federal Government and about half by State Government. The remaining are privately owned, all of them are under the supervision of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), which sets and maintain standards and approves of courses and programme for all in Nigeria.

Yusuf, Afolabi&Oyetayo (2014) asserted that teaching in Nigeria has been patronized by the people who could not succeed in their chosen vocations and the people who believe that teaching is a "spare time job" that allows them to simultaneously engage in other profit making businesses which they considered more lucrative than teaching. In the olden days, teachers were given due honour and respect in various society in Nigeria. Today, they are being looked down upon as people who could not find anything better for themselves in their society. They declared that teaching profession in Nigeria has been regarded as a dumping ground for people who desire to have a temporary job while they seek other jobs of their dreams.

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The belief that teaching should be professionalized in Nigeria has been recognized, appraised, echoed and re-echoed as a collective desire in the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2013) where it is clearly stated that teaching, like other professions, will be recognized as a profession. The Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established by Act No 31 of 1993 to regulate and control the teaching profession.

V. National Policy on Education and Teachers Education

According to the National Policy on Education (FGN) 2013) the goals of teacher education shall be the following:

- (a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system.
- (b) Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- (c) Helping teacher fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- (d) Providing teachers with the intellectual and profession background adequate for their assignment and to have them adaptable to changing conditions and
- (e) Enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

In line with the above mentioned, Teacher education in Nigeria may either be pre-service or in-service training. Pre-service teacher education is the teacher education given to people to make them qualified to teach at any level of education after their training programme. Pre-service teacher education is provided by Universities' Faculties of Education, School of Education and Colleges of Education. Service teacher education is the teacher training programmes given to people that are not professionally qualified to teach in the schools. The in-service teacher education is provided by University Institutes of Education, Sandwich programme in the Universities and Colleges of Education and the National Teachers' Institute. They mount programmes of teacher education in form of postgraduate Diploma in Education, Sandwich and part-time degree in Education for serving teachers and various skill improvement workshops. It is against this background that this paper examines professionalization of teaching through functional teacher education programme in Nigeria (Yusuf, Afolabi&Oyetayo, 2014). In the area of professionalism and teacher education, the NPE (2013) also stated that;

(94) The policy also elucidated that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained through the teachers education programmes for effective job performance.

(100) a. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) shall continue to register teachers and regulate teaching profession and practice.

b. Only professionally qualified and registered teachers shall be allowed to practice at all levels.

Disappointedly, this particular aspect of professionalism in teaching profession being captured by the policy is yet to be fully implemented despite various efforts made by the government.

VI. The Role of Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria in Teacher Professionalism

The continuous need to raise teaching to the status of full profession (like law, medicine, pharmacy, engineering among others), has been an issue of concern to all those interested in the business of quality education in Nigeria, especially the government. Realizing that for teaching to be recognized as a profession it must to a reasonable extent satisfy the criteria or characteristics set for an occupation to attain a professional status. One of such criteria demands for the establishment of a professional body or association to regulate entrance into the teaching profession and to control ethical conducts of members and eliminate quacks. The TRCN is an agency of the federal ministry of education that was established to regulate and control the teaching profession in all ramifications. This, as already noted was established by Act 31 of 1993. The council became operational by June 2000 with the appointment of a Registrar/Chief Executive by the then president and commander in Chief of the Armed forces of Nigeria General Olusegun Obasonjo. This was a big boost to the status of teaching in this country since it was the fulfilment of an important criteria required for teaching to get the status of a profession. It serves similar functions as those performed by the Nigerian Medical Council for medical doctors and the Nigerian Bar Association for lawyers in Nigeria.

This was with particular reference to teacher education programmes, registration and teacher licensing, mandatory continuing professional development, professional conduct and over all social status of teachers at all levels of the education system. However, this transformation cannot work unless there is a noticeable change in the attitudes, orientations, and overall behaviour of teachers towards greater values, ideals and practices as is the case in other noble professions. Since its establishment, the TRCN has been working tirelessly to uphold the teaching profession in Nigeria by launching campaigns, initiating awareness and professional development programmes. They have also been organizing workshops and conferences. To avoid excuses and claim of ignorance by teachers, TRCN distributed their pamphlets, handbills, statistical digest, teachers' code of conduct, teachers' handbook among others free. In a broader spectrum, the TRCN was meant to enunciate tremendous transformation in the teaching profession with particular attention to the quality of teacher education programmes, registration and licensing, mandatory continuing professional development, professional conduct and overall social status of teachers at all strata of the education system. Nevertheless, the workability of this transformation will deeply depend on the remarkable change in the attitudes, orientations, and behaviour of teachers in achieving greater values, ideals and practices as found in other noble professions.

It was hoped that through the tireless efforts of the council, sanity will be restored in teaching. Teachers can start to enjoy the overwhelming standards of theory and practice, rights, privileges, opportunities, dignity and good life that are being enjoyed in other noble professions, (TRCN, 2005).

VII. The Regulation of Teaching Profession in Nigeria: Mandate of TRCN

In section 1 (1) of TRCN Act 31 of 1993, the council was charged with the following responsibilities;

- i. Determine who teachers for the purpose of the Act are.
- ii. Determine what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers under this Act and raising those standards from time to time as circumstances may permit.
- iii. Securing in accordance with the provisions of this Act the establishment and maintenance of a register of teachers and the publication from time to time of the list of those persons.
- iv. Regulating and controlling the teaching profession in all its aspects and ramifications.
- v. Classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification.
- vi. Performing through the council established under this Act the functions conferred on it by this Act.

The implication of the above mentioned TRCN Act 31 of 1993, Section 1(1) is that the law has empowered TRCN to regulate and control the teaching profession in Nigeria "in all aspects and ramifications." The Act also gave TRCN the responsibility to determine who is a teacher in Nigeria; and to determine the level of knowledge and skills required to be a teacher and to raise the level from time to time.

Furthermore, it is well known fact that members of the noble professions compulsorily submit themselves to the requirements of their respective Acts regulating their professions. In the same vain, teachers in Nigeria are bound by the dictates of the TRCN Acts, they must be trained teachers, registered and regulated. It is clearly stated in section (2) of the Act that it is a criminal offence to find any one answering a teacher or doing a work of teaching as well as earning the reward associated with teaching without first registering with TRCN. Anyone convicted of this offence is liable to a fine of five thousand naira (N5, 000.00) or two years imprisonment or both as the law court may decide, (TRCN, 2010). It further opined that the provisions of the Act are very serious even though it has noted some obvious violations by both individuals and employers of teachers. However, the body asserts to have set machinery in power to enforce the provisions of the Acts and bring offenders to book.

Strategies towards full Professionalization of Teaching in Nigeria

To effectively complete the process of professionalizing teaching in Nigeria, Yusuf, Afolabi and Oyetayo (2014) opined that the following strategies have to be adopted by the Government, Teachers Organizations and the teachers themselves should take a number of steps.

Government Strategies of full Professionalism

The government must ensure immediate commencement of work by the recently established Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria. As the National Teachers Registration Council has been established through the enactment of Act No 31 of 1993, this national body should be assisted by the State Teachers' Registration Council in every State of the Federation, to be charged with the responsibility of teachers' registration, accreditation, certification, promotion, development, discipline and making regulations to control the practice of teaching as a profession.

The government should make provision for the professional growth of the teachers through periodic in-service education and this should be sponsored by the government. The teaching profession is such that requires a teacher to continue to improve and increase knowledge in his subject throughout his lifetime. The government should introduce unified service conditions for all categories of teachers throughout the country. This includes a unified salary such as the much agitated Teachers Salary Structure (TSS), specially designed for teachers to enhance their remuneration and welfare package. Provision should be made for enhanced opportunities for advancement and other fringe benefits in teachers' career structure. Career opportunity and progression for teachers would undoubtedly make teaching more attractive, rewarding and satisfactory. The minimum teaching qualification of NCE should be enforced by the Government.

The government should categorize teachers into three distinct groups as suggested by (Yusuf, Afolabi&Oyetayo, 2014). These categories are:

- (a) The full professional teachers to be made up of all graduates with teaching qualifications not lower than the NCE, Postgraduate Diploma in Education or a Bachelor's degree in education.
- (b) Intermediate professional teachers to be made up of all NCE holders; holders of Grade I and II Teacher's certificate.
- (c) Auxiliary teachers to be made up of all graduates without teaching qualification and non-graduates without teaching qualification.

Government should make concerted efforts towards modernizing teacher education programme. Computer science, instructional technology, classroom management, media and other communications courses should feature prominently in the teacher education programme to enhance capacity building and identification, improvisation and utilization of resources for effective teaching and learning in the classrooms. Like other professions such as medicine, law, engineering, pharmacy and accountancy that are highly valued in Nigeria, it becomes highly imperative to review the duration of the teaching practice exercise from a minimum of 12 weeks to 12 months. This will enhance professional development and proper orientation and adjustment of the teachers to school setting. However, the teacher education programme should be more effective and efficient for the trainees. They (trainees) should undergo a professional training in the colleges of education, university and other teacher education programmes.

Strategies by Teachers' Organization for full Professionalism

The teachers' organizations must be fully represented and actively involved and must work relentlessly to safeguard the autonomy inherent in the status of teaching as profession. They must strictly enforce members' compliance with professional codes of ethics. The nature, contents and activities clearly spelt out in their constitutions must be professional in all ramifications. The teachers' organizations must inspire their members to develop and maintain professional culture and refrain from unethical values. They should work cooperatively with the government in the provision of staff development programmes such as in-

service education, on-the-job training schemes, workshops, seminars, conferences and vacation programmes for teachers. The organisation should also restrict the entry and exit of members. To this end, the organisation should make sure that anybody that has not undergone proper training should not be allowed into the job.

TRCN Strategies of full Professionalism

TRCN can catch young teaching professionals by laying a strong foundation for professional consciousness and commitment through the induction of graduates in education disciplines at the point of graduation. Which is clearly stated as part of the main goals of the council. TRCN should pally with the ministry of education, university of education and other educational stakeholders to establish a Doctoral degree in Education (D.Ed.). Suggesting, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ogun State. Being the premier university of education in Nigeria. Alternatively, TRCN should also identify teachers who have distinguish themselves in research and contributed to educational development of the nation by recommending them for the government to award them scholarship to study Doctoral degree in Education (D.Ed.) outside the country especially in areas that they excel upon.

VIII. Challenges of Teaching Profession in Nigeria

Researchers John (2006); Akinduyo (2014) and Fareo (2015) posited that teaching profession has been faced with various categories of challenges. They include:

- Low wages, bad motivation and poor welfares
- Irregular self-esteem in the society
- Absence of education professional academy
- Negative re-enforcement which is doing the profession no good.
- Lack of professional and in-service trainings
- Low professional status
- High teacher –pupil ratio
- Ineffective machinery to enforce the code of conduct in the teaching profession.
- Politicizing education
- Lack of autonomy by Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT)
- Poor budgetary allocation to teaching profession
- Poor work environment (e.g. infrastructures amenities etc.)
- Government’s inability to register NUT as a profession organization
- Massive unqualified staff.
- Porous entry qualification
- Non-involvement of teachers in decision-making process
- The State control of staff personnel services for teachers
- Fragmentation of teachers into many different associations like Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), Conference of Primary School Head-Teachers, the All Nigerian Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), Committee of Provosts of Colleges of Education, Committee of Vice- Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Association of Classroom Teachers, Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (STAN) Social Studies Teachers Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) and other teacher organizations.

IX. Conclusions And Recommendation

The professionalization of teaching in Nigeria is not a mirage but a reality, due to a lot of positive efforts the Teachers Registration Council on Nigeria (TRCN) and Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) have made towards teachers’ registration, accreditation, certification, promotion, development, discipline and making regulations to control the practice of teaching as a profession. Teachers competence in terms of qualification an influence students’ academic performance and achievement.

Establishment of Doctoral degree in Education in Nigeria and the service recognition of dully registered members who have showed remarkable performance through scholarship to study would impact and encourage the teaching profession in Nigeria. There is a great need to put teachers on the same footing with other highly valued professionals in Nigeria and make teaching profession more attractive like other professions, due to the significant contributions to the development of the nation. The government has a key role to play in the professionalization of teaching profession by creating an enforcement act and a ‘watchdog’ that will enable the established policies and TRCN to effectively separate the ‘wheat from the shaft’ and putting the ‘right peg into the hole’ in the educational system.

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