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The Socio-Economic Implications of Teachers Supply Patterns on the Teaching Profession in Nigeria

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Abstract

Various scholars and researches have identified a number of traditions guiding the development of teacher education programmes. These include “the academic” tradition, “the social efficiency” tradition, “the developmentalist” tradition, otherwise referred to as the “personalist” or “humanist” tradition, and “the social reconstructionist” tradition. Education is the pivot of development in all countries, (Nigeria is no exception), and the availability of well-trained and highly qualified teachers is central to the supply of human capital needed to promote qualitative education. The training of teachers in Nigeria, which started in 1859 with the establishment of “The Training Institute”, at Abeokuta, has metamorphosed into present citadels of learning, where highly skilled manpower in the art of teaching are trained in large numbers yearly. However, the current hues and cries about the failing standard of education in Nigeria can be blamed partly on the patterns of teachers supply, their quality, and their level of performance. It is the attempt to unravel the validity of this assertion that has informed this paper.

Introduction

Education is the pivot of development in all countries and the availability of well-trained and highly qualified teachers is central to the supply of human capital needed to promote qualitative education. The training of teachers in the Nigerian setting is as old as the coming of Christian missionaries, who introduced Western education into the country. Led by the establishment of “The training Institute” at Abeokuta in 1859, teachers’ training colleges have metamorphosed into present citadels of learning where highly skilled manpower in the art of teaching are trained in large numbers yearly.

Moreover, the management of teachers’ supply in form of recruitment, training and retention, which was the prerogative of missionaries and their respective churches, has now become a public sector function. Successive federal and state governments allocate money to education yearly, and teachers’ training is an important sub-sector often provided for in the budget breakdown.

In response to this national interest in the teaching profession, both the requirements for entry into the profession as well as the content of syllabus for each grade of teachers, have changed over the years. It is important to note however that the current hues and cries about the falling standard of education in Nigeria can be blamed partly on the patterns of teachers’ supply, their quality, and their level of performance.

The Development of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The first Teacher Training college was established by the Church Missionary Society (CMS), in Abeokuta in 1859, and it was known as “The Training Institute”. The school was moved to Lagos in 1867, when the European missionaries were ejected from Abeokuta. By 1896, the school was moved to Oyo, as St. Andrew’s College. On the other hand, the Baptist Mission founded the Baptist Training College at Ogbomoso in 1897, while the Western Methodist Missionary Society started her own institution for training catechists and teachers in Ibadan in 1905, with a total of 4 students. By 1917, the number of students had increased to 20, while the institution became known as Wesley College, Ibadan.

Teachers’ training institutions also sprang up in other parts of the country. Christian missions in the East were providing informal training for this purpose, through the apprenticeship system. Homeless boys and children of converted village heads lived with the missionaries, and were taught to become pupil teachers and catechists. This practice was also common in the West, before and the after the establishment of teacher training institutions.

In 1892, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland proposed and found a unique institution, the Hope Waddell (Training) Institute, with a dual purpose to train young primary school leavers for various types of trade, and to train teachers and preachers. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the training of teachers started with the establishment of the Nassarawa School by the government in 1909.

Since they were established by missionaries, the early training institutes combined theology with teaching methods. Catechists were expected to teach, while trained teachers were also expected to serve as evangelists. As for the context of the syllabus, nearly all subjects taken now were included, plus a lot of Christian doctrines, such as preaching and theology. However, lack of trained tutors made it difficult for all colleges to teach all subjects, as emphasis varied from college to college, and among different missions. Students admitted into teachers’ training institutes were expected to have passed standard VI, served as pupil teachers for two years, passed the pupil teachers examination, and in addition to have acted as assistant teachers. After two years’ training at the college of education, they took a prescribed teachers’ certificate examination and were certified, if they passed.

Although, there were many criticisms of this system, ranging from its foreignness to its exploitative nature, the number of teachers’ training colleges had become 13 by 1926, with a total of 290 men and 30 women. This number rose to 53 colleges, with 3,026 students by 1946. Before this time, the Yaba Higher College, which emphasized science subjects, and was mainly for diploma certificate, had also been established, and was merged with the University of Ibadan when it started. Twenty-one of the transferred students were in Education.

With the aid of United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the Federal and State governments established five Advanced Teachers' Training College (ATTCs) in 1962 as an emergency scheme with a view to providing well-qualified non-graduate teachers for science at the lower forms of secondary schools. Students who were admitted were subsidized financially by their respective state governments.

At the university level, the training of graduate teachers was launched in 1960, and today hundreds of graduates with B.A/B.Sc. (Education) degree are being produced each year, to strengthen Nigerian secondary schools and teachers' training colleges. In order to ensure a steady supply of high quality teachers, in 1978, the Federal government launched a crash programme for teacher training. At first, it aimed at producing about 2,000-university graduate and Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) teachers annually, for five years, so that Nigerians can effectively manage Nigerian schools. Education students were given scholarships, and science students were accorded preference in this regard. This system, referred to as Crash Programme Scheme, continued until 1984 when it was abolished.

However, teacher education at the university is still heavily subsidized in the country. The foregoing discussion suggests that the teaching profession is of paramount importance to the Nigerian economy, and as the bedrock of economic growth, education has received a lot of attention from the Federal government for a number of years (see Table 1).

Table 1: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE IN SOME SECTORS OF SELECTED YEARS

Year	Agricultural Sector	Health	Defence	Education
1970	0.8	1.0	47.6	0.6
1975	3.0	1.0	21.8	1.0
1980	2.0	1.5	13.5	5.2
1985	2.3	1.5	19.9	5.6
1990	3.0	1.4	6.5	4.7
1995	1.5	1.8	6.2	4.7

Source: Computed from Statistical Bulletin of Central Bank of Nigeria, 1996

Literature Review

Various Scholars and Researchers have identified a number of traditions guiding the development of teacher education programmes. The works of Kemmes, et al (1983), Smyth (1991), and Flourey and Zimpher (1989), among many others, seem to draw from the threefold schema of knowledge interests development by a technocratic, by a

hermeneutic, or by an emancipatory rationally. In our approach to schooling and education, we can therefore stress a means-ends, utilitarian, reproductive dimension, a personalist, humanist, open-ended and interpretative approach, or a more politically informed and transformative commitment.

It would be instructive to consider briefly the ways such names inspire traditions of initial teacher education, before moving on to an analysis of what constitutes good teaching and good teacher training. Liston and Zeichner (1993) identify four such traditions –“the academic” tradition, “the social efficiency” tradition, “the developmentalist” tradition (otherwise referred to as “personalist” or humanists” tradition), and “the social reconstructionist” tradition.

The “academic tradition” developed mainly following the attempt to establish education as a university discipline in its own right, and to have equal status with other faculties. It therefore emphasized the teaching of foundation discipline, and treated the teacher more as a scholar, and a subject specialist, than as a pedagogue. In this case, it is more important to know mathematics (the subject) than to know Mary and John (the students) in order to be considered a “good teacher”.

The “social efficiency tradition” of teacher education is closely associated to the technocratic rationality, identified by Habermas, and its hallmark is a faith in the scientific study of education and application of results of such study. It entails a comprehensive description of duties and traits of teachers, and building a programme on that, and hence is competency and performances based. The emphasis is on specific skill training, through such programmes as microteaching, micro computer and other simulations and teacher training packages, with the “good teacher” being the one who is capable of applying a knowledge base, which has been specified in advance. It is the “how to” rather than the “why” questions which predominate in this approach, and at its worst, this tradition gives rise to teacher proof teaching packages, so eloquently criticized by Apple (1986). It is this tradition which seems to predominate in a number of Western-type democracies at the present historical conjuncture (Smyth, 1991).

A third tradition, which Liston and Zeichner identify is what they call the “developmentalist tradition”, or as it has been referred to by others, the “personalist” or “humanist” tradition. Here, the “good teacher” knows John and Mary, at least as much as she knows Mathematics. Inspired by the child study movement, this approach highlights the necessity of providing supportive and stimulating learning environments. The corresponding image of the teacher is that of a person who is fully alive, and who, rather than mechanically applying skills, is – rather more like an artist, naturalist, and researcher–involved in facilitating the growth of the learner through such expressive techniques as dance, creative dynamics, writing, painting, story-telling etc. The “good teacher” is, in this tradition, the one who is capable of responding to students’ current understanding and development readiness, so that learning is seen as emerging out of personal relationship through constructionist approaches.

A fourth tradition is the “social reconstructionist” or transformative one, aligned to Habermas notion of emancipatory rationality. In this approach to teacher education, the focus is on teachers’ abilities to see social and political implications of actions. There is an understanding of education as a means of promoting a more humane and just society, so that the key image is transformation, not reproduction of society. Teacher education inspired by this tradition is likely to adopt a political agenda, which includes positive discrimination in favour of the poor and the disadvantage by the system, and are particularly sensitive to the needs of learners who come from the working class, from ethnic and racial minorities; who suffer from disabilities, and who are girls.

The implications of these traditions of teacher education, and the images or vision of education they carry with them, are important, and have been elaborated upon in different ways of Kemmis (1984) and Codd (1985) among others. The former author seems to suggest that particular programmes fall rather narrowly into one of the traditions identified, while Musgrave (1984), Liston and Zeichner (1991), suggest that in fact any educational project, including teacher, education, necessarily engage all of the above-mentioned rationalities, though, a particular programme, when it emphasizes one or more of these traditions over others. The traditions can therefore be considered to be akin to Weber’s heuristic device, which he referred to as “idea types”.

The Status of Teachers’ Supply Vis-à-vis Demand in Nigeria

The need for more schools, and logically, more teachers, is steadily expanding in Nigeria. The population explosion in schools in taxing, to the breaking point, the facilities of the educational institutions, technological progress, and the necessity of acquiring education by the populace stimulate demand for teachers of skills, while the society is offering highly competitive occupational alternative to teaching. The impact of egalitarianism, as contained in the National Policy on Education, and of other welfare policies, like scholarship and bursary, tend to transform schools for the elite into universal’ schools.

For example, Nigeria’s philosophies of education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen, and ostensibly guarantee equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system. Towards the attainment of this end, the 5 main educational objectives of Nigeria, as stated in the Second National Development Plan and endorsed as the necessary foundation for the National Policy on Education are the building of:

1. A free and democratic society
2. A just and egalitarian society
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation.
4. A great and dynamic economy
5. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens

All these objectives cause demand for an increased teaching force. However, the need for greater number of teachers should not becloud the need for good quality. The issue

assumes greater significance when one realizes that whatever the geographical location, political ideology or social structure, every modern nation, in one form or the other, is committed to the fundamental truth, that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The Yates (1972) Report clearly underlie the universal nature of the problem:

“...that the growing recognition that the education of teacher is the single most important element in any programme of education is not the result of any philosophical argument, nor can it be said to have been earned by its practitioners. It has rather been forced upon us by an accumulation of evidence derived from attempts (by social forces) to introduce a variety of educational innovations”.

In other words, because of the fast evolving nature of societal needs, and the central role of school, teachers have become overwhelmed by the ever increasing expectation of society.

The UNESCO (1972) meeting of experts agreed that the present forms and methods of preparing future teachers for their duties were generally of doubtful value, both in quality and quantity. Today, over two decades later, the trend is no less gloomy for both developing and advanced countries, due to demands of modernism (evolution and revolution), at the social, scientific and technological levels.

The trend is amply reflected in the trend of teachers’ supply. For example, the total enrolment in primary schools in Nigeria in 1988, as contained in Table II below, was 12,690,789. While the total number of teachers for the same period was 308, 178, with the teacher-pupil ratio standing at 1 to 41 (1:41). In 1992, the figure for total enrolment in primary schools was 14,805,937. The total number of teachers for the same period was 407,987. While the teacher–pupil ratio stood at 1 to 39 (1:39).

In the preceding decades, the picture was much different. For example, in 1973 the total number of pupils enrolled in the nations’ primary schools was 5,998,453, with a total teacher population of 160,384, and a teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 34 (1:34).

TABLE II: NATIONAL SUMMARY OF PRIMARY STATISTICS FOR SELECTED YEARS

	1973	1988	1992
Total Pupil Enrolment	5,998,453	12,690,798	14,805,937
Total Number of Teachers	160,384	308,178	407,987
Teacher-Pupil Ratio	1:34	1:41	1:39

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos.

The situation in the secondary segment of the education ladder is not drastically different. In 1972, for example, as contained in Table III, the total number of students

enrolled in the nation's secondary schools was 535,965, while the population of teachers was 16,961, giving ratio of 1 teacher to 24 pupils. In the 1992, the total student enrolment was 3,600,620, while the total number of teachers was 147,530, at the teacher-pupil ratio of 1 to 25 (1:25).

TABLE III: NATIONAL SUMMARY OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL STATISTICS

	1972	1988	1992
Total Student Enrolment	535,965	2,941,781	3,600,620
Total Number of Teachers	1:24	1:22	1:25
Teacher-Pupil Ratio			

Source: Federal Ministry of Education, Lagos.

The highlight of these data are that, a rather abysmally low proportion of the teachers enumerated above are not trained for the job which they perform. This has significant implications for quality. For example, in 1963, teachers with the Grade II or those with a higher certificate were 15,976, out of a total number of 94, 176 teachers in primary schools. This implies that only one teacher out of six was certificated. This implies that majority of those who teach our children are not qualified to teach. The prevailing statistics regarding trained versus untrained teaches would be more startling.

Another area that is of concern is the overcrowding of classrooms, particularly in the primary schools. The ratio of 1:41, 1:39, 1:34 in the years under review gives one cause for concern. These figures run contrary to the UNESCO approved teacher-pupil ratio of 1:25. The implication of this on classroom interaction is that the class becomes unwieldy while the teacher is unable to exercise effective control on the class. Effective teaching and learning can hardly take place in such a setting.

Socio-Economic Implication of the Supply Pattern and Probable Solution

Our highlights in section 3 have a lot of implication for the Nigerian system of education, the teaching profession, and the economy in general.

The shortage of teachers, relative to the growing number of students, suggests that standard of education may fall or may have been failing, since the few teachers available may not be able to impart adequate knowledge on the growing number of students/pupils. This may be responsible for the growing international doubt about the quality of the Nigerian certificate. Hitherto, Nigerian certificates were not subjected to rigorous scrutiny outside the country, while at the tertiary level, prospective postgraduate students were not required to sit for examinations before being admitted for higher degrees in most countries.

Secondly, it is very common to find trained teachers working in other sectors of the Nigerian economy, such as banks, administration, private business firms, etc. Conversely, untrained teachers are employed to teach in primary and secondary schools. Both of these suggest a misfit and a big anomaly in the system. In the first place, even

though they teach in schools, such untrained teachers cannot claim to be a genuine part of the teaching profession and are not likely to measure up, both in terms of quality, and moral strength. For the nation as a whole, this constitutes a problem that has serious adverse effects on education and students' performance in general.

Another serious negative effect of government's liberal attitude towards teaching and teaching profession is that privately owned schools are not closely guided as to their recruitment pattern for teachers. Very often such schools want to maximize profit and minimize cost, and hence employ unqualified teachers who are paid very low wages and salaries, and then employ all sorts of shady strategies to make sure that their students perform best in external examinations. Unknowingly however, parents send their children to such schools because they are interested only in "managed results" and not the quality of teaching. The economic interpretation of this is that parents are actually willing to pay highly for education as long as the end results are good. For teaching as a profession, these are undermining factors that present it as an easy one and most of time a stepping-stone to other more prestigious professions.

At this stage therefore, we need to ask what can be done to secure a better image of teaching as a profession as well as the guarantee of better supply patterns and management strategies for the teaching profession.

Effective Policies for Teachers' Supply and Management in Nigeria.

Given the above discussion, we feel obliged at the stage to make these suggestions.

The government and people of Nigeria must continue to accord high priority to education in order to achieve the national goals of education. The government needs to provide adequate budgets for education, and demonstrate their appreciation, by assigning the responsibility for education to able hands, and then give attention to the orderly progress of educational programmes. The laws, regulations, practices and curricular should be based on the best Nigerian culture and traditions, but aimed at the objectives which were formulated into the national philosophy of education.

There should be a continual flow of trained and qualified teachers into the system. The teachers should train to play their role of teaching their subjects and giving support and leadership to their pupils, integrating themselves into the community and contributing to its development.

Adult literacy, although strictly not with the formal system, has a great influence on the quality and quantity of education in the formal system. The machinery of the teachers educational system should be checked periodically and "oiled." Administrative inspectors; head-teachers and the generality of teachers should be subject to assessment and self-assessment. Materials and equipment are aids to learning. Large airy buildings in clean and beautiful environment, with well cared-for children, suitable desks and seats, furniture and apparatus well equipped laboratories and workshops, well stocked libraries,

games and athletic materials, farm and garden tools, are essential in an institution offering an all-round-education.

The Nigerian education system is a dynamic institution. The goals of education are to meet the needs of a changing society. The goals should therefore be re-examined periodically, with the communities involved, to ensure that the goals continue to be responsive to the needs of the society. In turn, the system should be reviewed and revised with the involvement of the communities, to enable it to function efficiently and achieve the reviewed goals. It would be invidious to suggest an order of importance for these organs, but teachers, whether class or subject teachers, or head, are extremely important organs of the system. Owing to the close and continual interaction of the class teacher and his pupils, the teacher exerts a great influence on the children. The children look up to him for guidance, support, and protection. In addition to the knowledge and skill, which he, implies, the children learn from him informally by observing him, his attitude, manners, conducts, and general behaviour. He or she is the umpire in the interaction of the children among themselves, from which they perceive some sense of observation. He translates the schemes, aims and objective of education into action in the classroom. He has to maintain discipline in his class, so as to ensure a suitable atmosphere for work and activity. A teacher is also in a strong position to influence his class as a whole as well as the children in the class. On account of the importance of teachers in the system, the state law provides that “no person shall teach in any school unless his name has been placed on the register of teachers, or after his name has been removed from such register, he ceases to teach”.

Clearly related to the general problem of teacher quality and training is the often over-looked or underemphasized need to continually retrain practicing teachers by way of refresher courses, conversion occurs, in-service training, etc, and a periodic systemic reappraisal of local teacher training programmes. In the Soviet Union, for example, and to a lesser extent in France, refresher courses are mandatory, and are seen as a vital part of the teachers’ continuing education, and improvement of professional skills. This applies not only to practicing class teachers but to teachers’ trainers too. As at 1977 there were 2.7. Million teachers in the USSR; of which between 500,000 and 600,000 attended refresher courses or in-service reviews of new syllabus.

Many educational systems like Nigeria, and particularly the English speaking Third World, unlike the Francophone world, lack effective control over the mobility of teachers, especially those whose professional training were, until 1984, borne by either the Federal, or State Governments. The problem of retention in Nigeria is clearly one, which has to be neutralized. A conservative estimate would put the teacher turnover at more than 50%, as against recruitment or initial enrolment in teacher training colleges and universities. It is well known fact, for example, that bonds and contracts signed by student-teachers for grants, bursaries and federal scholarship are breached with impunity, since there is neither effective control, monitoring, nor enforcement of such agreement, after the beneficiaries have graduated. While most teachers who have turned to other trades explain this mobility phenomenon on poor conditions of service, lack of equipment, poor interest on the part of pupils and low teacher morale and motivation, it

should be clear that this does not in any way justify the considerable wastage to which government has unwittingly been committing its valuable resources.

In the French system there is an absolute control and a systematically enforced term of contract signed by state sponsored prospective teachers. In the case of the Institute preparation a l'enseignement secondaire (IPES), recruitment is done among students who have completed one successful academic year at university or class preparatories'. Such students do receive government stipend or monthly salary (similar to the Teachers' Bursary award in Nigeria). But in clear contrast to the Nigerian system, these prospective teachers sign, and must discharge same after training, the terms of a 10-year contract to teach at the secondary level. Although the insistence on standards is simply reflected in the rigorous tests and examinations and the very high failure rate characteristic of the French Education System, there are alternative positions to fill for every trainee who fails; as such the retention rate of prospective teachers is not affected. King (1979) states:

“it should be noted that having signed a 10 year engagement, a candidate who fails to be accepted as qualifying for the certificate... is bound to accept some very minor school post as auxiliary teacher or boarding school assistance unless he pays back the money he has already received”.

Perhaps the strongest model of recruitment and professional training in France is that of the CAPES (Teacher Proficiency Certificate for Secondary School Teaching) which is organised in two stages; the CAPES 'theorique' (academic content) followed by a year of 'CAPES pratique' devoted to acquiring professional skills through practical methods and extensive observation and teaching practice experiences. Here again, only the very best and committed survive.

“in the typical recent year 32,000 candidates who enrolled for the CAPES qualification failed to obtain it, representing 90 percent of the candidates. From this tale of endurance we see that competition favours those who concentrate on passing the competitive examinations at the cost of other kinds of personal development. While this says much for quality and retention of teachers, the issues of quality does not arise since the number of state jobs are determined well in advance and the severity of competitive examination is only meant to fill in these places with the very best”.

Nigeria can borrow a leaf from this practice and if followed to the letter, the quantity of education would shoot in the upward direction, the morale of teachers would rise tremendously, the country would make substantial progress in the areas of scientific and technological development, and everybody would be better for it.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one would rightly summarize that all is not well with the teachers' supply pattern as is presently the case in the country. It is also logical to conclude that the socio economic considerations and input into the supply pattern is far from adequate. This is aside from the other multifarious problems bedeviling the practitioners of the profession. There is also another contentious issue of monitoring the system adequately, to minimize, if not eradicate, wastage. Furthermore, there is the need to ensure that people adhere, as much as practicable, strictly to practice the job for which they have been trained, such that the issue of "round pegs in square holes", would not arise, as this has significant implications for the end products, in this case, the students. There is a lot to be done by all concerned, to ensure that the education system attains the desirable level that it rightly deserves. It should be stressed, repeatedly, that no nation could rise above the quality of its teachers. Consequently, every effort must be geared towards producing good quality teachers for the nation.

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