

An X-ray on Problems associated with Teaching Profession at Secondary School level in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract- During the Pre and early Post-Colonial Nigeria, teaching profession was considered as one the best and highly respected profession. Teachers were seen as people who take ignorance away from people and as such they were highly respected by both their students and members of the Community. In the recent time, the profession had a setback, Teachers in Niger State are no longer respected, People are not passionate about the job. This paper examines the major problems affecting teaching profession at secondary school level in Niger State, Nigeria, which includes; poor salary, lack of adequate teaching and learning materials, higher teacher-student ratio, low status accorded to them by members of the Community and low morale in the profession. Few recommendations were given which will help in raising the standard of the profession to gain its lost glory.

Index Terms- Teacher, Teaching Profession, Secondary School

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of teaching in Nigeria could be traced as far back as the missionary period, when the missionary trained and employed indigenous Nigerians to help in teaching various communities in the Western and Southern regions. As pointed out by Adeyinka (1971) the missionaries trained their teachers through the pupil-teacher system, a system where the school and pupils lived in the same compound as one big family. The aim of this system is to have a close monitoring of the pupils' activities and progress in respect of what they have been taught, because at the end of the training they will be subjected to an examination which will qualify them to be recruited as teachers. Fajana, (1978) highlighted that the pupils who are within the age of 14 years had to passed the Standard V examination before their recruitment as teachers. The successful ones were recruited as teachers to receive an hour instruction daily from their head-teacher who taught them the elementary technicalities of teaching.

With the establishment of teacher training school in the Northern part of Nigeria in 1909, the system of teacher recruitment started to take a new shape. Having passed the Standard V examination, a candidate must have served as a pupil-teacher for two years as assistant teacher before enrolling into another two years course at the Nassarawa school where he will be trained and made to sit and pass a prescribed Teacher Certificate Examination, (TCE) (Fafunwa, 1995).

After sometimes there were lots of criticism on the Missionary's system of teacher training and recruitment. In 1925 a committee was set up by the colonial administration to look into the issue. According to the report of the committee as stated by Jekayinfa (2005) the Missionary system of teacher training was unsatisfactory, the pupil-teacher was over-worked, under-paid, and the curriculum was poorly conceived. So an effective cadre teacher was suggested by the committee, they added that there should be significant improvements in the conditions of service of the teachers in order to attract the best candidates into the profession. The recommendation of the committee was implemented, teaching became a profession with teachers becoming highly respected, they played a key leadership role in the local communities and acted as role models. They were next to Colonial masters in order of ranking, so they were valued. They were seen as people sent by God to take ignorance away from the land in substitute for fortunes and good tidings. Because of the respect attached to teachers, they hardly touched their salary as the community provides almost all their daily needs, (Usman, 2008). This practice continued not until 1955 when the Western part of Nigeria introduced the Universal Education which led to massive enrolment of students into schools these led to employment of many untrained teachers which make it difficult for the Colonial government to cater for. Few years later, a commission was set up to review policy on teacher employment. In their report according to Adelabu (2005) it recommends the gradual elimination of untrained teachers in the schools, improvement of teachers' condition of service, the promotion of efficient teachers to the highest professional grades, but the report was later not implemented probably because of political reasons.

This scenario marked the beginning of crises in the teaching profession in Nigeria. At present teaching is no longer respected, the situation and conditions of teachers is said to be poor, the profession is becoming a class occupation. Teachers no longer form the bases of the educated class in the society, the profession no longer carries the social prestige and respect accorded to it in the past. Teachers are today followers rather than leaders (Mohammed, 2006). This is also the same situation of teaching profession at Secondary School level in Niger State.

Having discussed teaching profession at the preceding section, the next part of this paper will focus on the administration and financing education in Niger State, with the aim of pointing out the level of low commitment from the side of Government, which by implication led to numerous problems

confronting teaching profession at Secondary School level in the State.

II. ADMINISTRATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

Secondary school education occupies a very important position in the educational system of any Country. It is the level that determines the academic and professional career of students, at this level the student determines what career he/she wants to choose and what to become in future. The Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004:4) has defined secondary education as “the type of education children receive after the primary education and before the tertiary education”.

From the above, the strategic importance of secondary education is no longer in doubt, it is the bridge between the primary and tertiary education. Ajayi et al. (2009) added that, the aim of secondary education is to provide opportunity for quality education for primary school leavers, cater for the differences in talents of the pupils, develop Nigeria cultural heritage, produce a generation of people who respect the dignity of labour, foster Nigerian unity and to inspire its students with the desire for achievement and self- improvement both at school and in later life.

Before the Nigerian independence, the administration of secondary schools lies within the jurisdiction of the Colonial government, but after independence in 1960 the Nigerian government took over the schools from the Colonialist (Usman, 2008). In Niger State, there are three kinds of secondary schools, the Federal Government secondary schools, the State owned secondary schools and the private secondary schools. At least, two Federal Government secondary schools are located in each of the State of the Federation. The financing and the administration of the schools is solely shouldered by the Federal Government, all issues regarding recruitment of staff and their salaries, provision of learning facilities in the schools and whatever the school may require are provided by the Federal Government.

On the other hand, in Niger State, all the State established secondary schools are handled by the State Government. For example, there are about 215 Government secondary schools spread among the three educational zones of Kontagora, Minna and Bida. (Niger State Secondary Education Board, (NSSEB) 2012). The administration of these schools is run by the state government. Teachers are recruited by the State Secondary Education Board. Qualified applicants are shortlisted for an interview before their employment as teachers. The minimum qualification of teaching in secondary schools is Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE), although the board also recruit those without teaching qualification, like holders of B.Sc and B.A degrees in other fields due to shortage of teaching staff with the teaching qualifications. Each School is headed by a Principal who is answerable to the State Ministry of Education and Secondary Education Board.

III. FINANCING SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

As the States controlled the affairs of secondary schools in the area of administration they are also in charge of the financing, despite the fact that each State relied on the monthly subvention from the Federal government added to the internally generated revenue to enable them pay the salary of workers (teachers inclusive). The States also are to provide all the necessary facilities to their established secondary schools. Keith (2002) added that, payment of Teachers’ Salary, provision of Instructional Materials, building of classrooms in the state owned Secondary schools is the responsibility of the State.

All the Niger State established secondary schools are financed by the State. Teacher salaries, construction and maintenance of classrooms and other facilities in the schools are shouldered by the State Government. Though there is clear evidence that the Government of Niger State is not living up to expectation in the area of financing education. For example, from the budget of 2009, 2010 and 2011 the money allocated to education was insufficient as indicated in the Table 1.1

Table 1.1: NIGER STATE GOVERNMENT APPROVED BUDGET

Year of Budget	Total Budget of the state	Allocation to Education	Percentage
2009	N 69,090,088,075:00	N 1,590,085,257:21	0.23%
2010	N 115,935,318,818:00	N 1,939,454,377:00	1.67%
2011	N 129,611,730,715:00	N 1,799,826,989:28	1.39%

Sources: Niger State Budget and Planning office 2012
NB. 1 USD is equivalent to N199 (exchange rate)

From the Table above, it is glaring that the fund allocated to education was very minimal. According to UNESCO (2010) the required budget allocation to education should be 26% of the total budget estimate. Looking at the above allocation in Niger State, it is clear that in 2009 Education received 0.23% of the total budget, while the allocation increased in 2010 to 1.67%, later dropped to 1.39% in 2011. This is an indication that within the last three years, education was unable to get 2% of the total state budget estimate. By implication of this analysis it is clear that Education is not given much priority in the state, and that could be another reason why the state is among the least paid in terms of teacher salaries among the neighbouring States of Kogi, Nasarawa, and Kaduna. The Tables below show salary of graduate teacher in Niger State and Nassarawa States for comparison.

Table 1.2: Salary of Graduate Teacher (GL 08/01) in Niger state

Salary before and after monthly deductions

Annual Salary N 384,750.91
Monthly Salary before deductions N 32,062.38

Pension Scheme N 2,404.69
Federal mortgage N 801:56
Union deduction N 961:88
Pay as you earn N 774:27
Total Deduction N 4942:40
Monthly salary after deduction N 27119.98

Source: Account Dept. Niger state Secondary Education Board (2012).

Table 1.3: Salary of Graduate Teacher (GL 08/02) in Nassarawa State.

Salary before and after monthly deductions

Annual Salary N 794,359.92
Monthly Salary before deductions N 66,196.66

Pension scheme N 2,604.69
Federal mortgage N 801.70
Union deduction N 901.00
Pay as you earn N 794.27
Total deduction N 5101.66
Monthly salary after deduction N 61095.00

Source: Account Dept. Nassarawa state secondary education board (2012)

NB. In Niger state a graduate is employed on Grade Level 08 step 01, while in Nassarawa state a graduate starts with Grade Level 08 step 02.

From Tables 1.2 and 1.3, it is clear that a graduate's salary in Niger State after the monthly deductions is N27,120.18 per month, while his counterpart in Nassarawa State earns N61,095.00 per month, after deductions.

IV. PROBLEMS OF TEACHING PROFESSION IN NIGER STATE

There are numerous problems associated with Teaching at Secondary School level in Niger State, Nigeria which cannot completely be enumerated, but few out of the problems are discussed below;

- Poor Salary:** Teachers are said to be among the most poorly paid civil servants in the state, their salary cannot take care of their needs not to talk of their family. Many of them hardly can afford their basic needs because the salary is so poor. Some cannot even pay the school fees of their children and the medical health as well. Comparing the salary of teachers in Niger and Nassarawa States as indicated in tables 1.2 and 1.3 in the preceding section, it is glaring that teachers are not

properly paid. Although, the issue of poor salary in the teaching profession is not restricted to Niger State alone, majority of States in Nigeria are having similar problem, for instance Arong, F., & Ogbadu, M. (2010) reported that, most teachers in Nigeria are not satisfied with their salary compare to other civil servants in the country, they added that, poor salary was among the major reason why most teachers are leaving the profession to another.

- Lack of teaching and learning materials:** This is another problem associated with teaching in Niger State, there were no adequate teaching/learning materials in most secondary schools. These problems is making teaching profession so difficult and boring. Teachers have no access to instructional materials to teach their students, most lessons that involves practical are not carried out as expected. Okebukola (2000) in similar study conducted in Lagos, Nigeria on the State of learning environment in schools. He discovered that, in the sampled schools about 75% of those interviewed, complained on the nature of learning facilities in their schools. They commented on the inadequate facilities in their laboratory, some libraries are almost empty, no textbooks for students and even teacher's uses.
- Higher teacher-Student ratio:** According to the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004, p.22), the ratio of students to teacher is 1:40, but surprisingly because of shortage of teachers and massive student enrolment, is very common to find a class with more than 100 students per teacher. Bala, (2009), stated that as a result of poor management in our schools which resulted to non-conducive learning environment, more than 100 students sit in a class to receive instructions from a teacher. Poor salary with high students' population is making teaching in Niger State uninteresting and most teachers are finding it difficult to effectively handle their students. When an assignment was given, teachers cannot mark each script with justification because of the over-population of their students.
- Low status in the Community:** Teachers are not highly respected as before. In many communities, Parents prefer their children/ward to study courses that will NOT lead them to becoming teachers, they give priority to professional courses, such as; Engineering, Medicine, Architecture or Law. In Niger State, having a reasonable job that is associated with reasonable payment earns respect for one in the Community. Because of teachers' low payment, the Community no longer respect them, they are treated as second class citizens.
- Low Morale in the profession:** Teachers are the center piece of any educational system. No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teacher whose morale is low is not likely to perform as expected in the school system. According to Ajayi and Oguntoye, (2003), the numerous problems permeating the entire educational system in Nigeria such as cultism, examination malpractices, drug abuse, indiscipline, persistent poor academic performance of students in

public examinations and many more seem to suggest that teachers' morale is not considered and that was why all the factors exist. Fadipe, (2003), posited that teachers, apart from students, are the largest most crucial inputs of an educational system. They influence to a great extent the quality of the educational output. Teachers' irregular promotion, low pay package (when compared to other public workers), societal perception of the job and many more have dampened the morale of teachers. When teachers are not motivated, their level of job commitment may be low and the objectives of the school may not be accomplished.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the preceding sections, efforts have been made to examine the position of teachers during the Colonial and Post-Colonial periods, pointing out how the profession was highly respected. The Administration and Financing of Secondary Schools in Niger State was also discussed, with a clear emphasis on how the State Government is under Funding education which is equally affecting teaching profession, thereby making teaching from prestigious profession to a job that no one want join except when there is no alternative. It is only when these problems were given due consideration by Niger State Government, then teaching profession will regain its past glory.

The State government as a matter of urgency need to improve teachers' salary, and even make them the most highest paid in the State among other civil servants, this will help in attracting other people to the job and those in already will be comfortable and put in their best.

The number of classes need to be added so as to reduce the over population of students in class, and more teachers need to be employed in other to reduce the burden to the existing teachers and these will make the classes more learning friendly. Teaching materials need to be made available so that teaching will be more practical, concrete and easy to both teachers and the students. If all these are put in place, teaching profession will be respected by the Community and the morale of teachers will be high, thereby making them have sense of belonging and becoming proud of their profession as done by other professions in the State.

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