

Teacher Education: A Genuine Tool for Curbing Social Challenges in Nigeria

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Abstract: This paper analytically explores the missing links between teacher education and social problems also known as social ills. A social problem is a condition which effects large number of people in an adverse manner. It can also be seen as a difficulty of misbehaviour which vast majority wants to correct. Social problem also arises when there is deviation from accepted social norms. These are usually threats to established social norms and therefore, it is necessary to eliminate them as quickly as possible. Elimination of social ills posed challenges to all and sundry including teaching profession. The paper views education in the 21st century as a dramatic departure from information delivery system of the past. A career in education is rigorous, intellectual and ethical work. Teaching is an opportunity to touch the future and reform society at large. The paper argues that there is need for a new cohort of teacher educators that approach teacher education based on clinical and experiential theories of learning. Teaching at its core is a moral profession, 'scratch a good teacher and you will find a moral purpose'. Therefore, teacher education programs must help teaching learners to learn social responsibility and moral purpose that influence them with the tools that will prepare them to engage in productive change. Finally, the paper posits that social ills can be dealt with provided teacher education links initial teacher preparation and continuous teacher development based on social responsibility, moral purpose and attitudinal change with the corresponding restructuring of societal needs and their relationships. The paper recommends elimination of justice discriminatory practice everywhere especially on women, less privileged and minorities in order to create harmony of co-existence and cooperation amongst Nigerians.

I. Introduction

The schools of teacher education ought to be in a position to think clearly and freely about the challenges facing our society. They are certainly not perfect, but their ability to take an independent stance on education policies and practices is crucial for us to avoid complete groupthink. This sort of ideological unanimity in support of obsession over data is what social problems apparently want. Robertson (2008) argues that teacher education institutions need to be sustained as autonomous from social and political centres which would turn teacher preparation towards their own interests. The social and political context that we find ourselves in today has implications for teacher education and especially if the focus of teaching is on experiential learning. As teacher educators, we need to think about how these realities influence our work; the polarized political climate, the educational assessment and accountability movement, and challenges to schools (Robert, 2008; Cody, 2012; Hassard, 2012).

A social problem is any deviant behaviour in a disapproved direction of such a degree that it exceeds the tolerance limit of the community. It may also be defined as a condition, which effects large number of people in an adverse manner. Considering social problem as a difficulty of misbehaviour which vast majority wants to correct, such as violence, lawlessness, hostage-taking of prominent citizens, expatriate of workers, oil bunkering, arms insurgence, cultism, hence there is need for teacher education to be more proactive.

Various forms of social ills has economic, political or religious undertone and youths are said to be actively involved perhaps as a result of youth restiveness. Elegbeleye (2005) affirmed that young people all over the world are a vital and important segment of the society in which they live. A disciplined, focused, and law-abiding youth can create a bright future for any nation. Conversely, a lawless, indulgent, and violent youth is a great threat to a nation's peace and security.

To this end, teacher education is at a threshold. Social responsibility, moral purpose and attitudinal change are implicit in what good teaching and effective change are about, but as yet they are society's great untapped resources for radical and continuous improvement. Therefore, there is a need for rationale behind why teaching and teacher development are fundamental to the future of society.

However, education is seen as a challenging and important profession that offers an opportunity to make a difference and to make a better world. It is an inspiring field with a strong potential for personal fulfilment and satisfaction. The significance of education today cannot be overstated, education confronts some of today's most difficult and challenging issues such as; empowering of students to be critical thinkers, creating culturally relevant pedagogy, teaching from a faith-based perspective and giving priority to the development of social justice and equity in the classroom, role of education in a democratic society, creating movements of

liberation for disenfranchised young people through education and teacher education for curbing social ills among others. In other words, education is a tool for teaching moral purpose, social change and attitudinal change of the people in the society.

It is therefore, necessary to make people understand that education is designed and recommended to live in peace and respect and accept each other in our cultural, ethnic, gender, and religious differences because they are the expression of the diversity of God's creation. We belong to each other in our differences and because of our differences that is how we belong as ONE to God. In this wise, education is a knowledge giver which gives wisdom and a better understanding of ourselves and others to maintain peace living (John, 2005). That is, one's life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation and compassion. This study examines the place of teacher education in curbing social ills considering the fact that social ill in whatever form capable of jeopardizing future of the society.

II. Conceptual Framework; Social Ills

A social problem is any deviant behaviour in a disapproved direction of such a degree that it exceeds the tolerance limit of the community. It could be seen as a condition which effects large number of people in an adverse manner. In other words, it is a difficulty of misbehaviour which vast majority wants to correct. Social ill also arises when there is deviation from accepted social norms. These are usually threats to establish social ways and therefore, it is necessary to eliminate them as quickly as possible (Lundberg, 2005).

Causes of Social Ills

A number of studies have identified factors responsible for social ills. Elegbeleye (2005) identifies three major factors: the peer motivated excitement of being a student, the jingoistic pursuit of patriotic ideas, and perceived victimization arising from economic exploitation. Others are lack of humanitarian and social welfare, lack of good governance, corrupt practices of government officials, inadequate training programmes, unemployment, inadequate recreational facilities, and lack of quality education among others.

III. Analyzing the Causes

Inadequate Communication and Information Flow: Communication creates room for sharing information. It helps people express their thoughts and feelings, clarify problems, and consider alternative ways of coping or adapting to their situation. Such sharing promotes social cohesion. People must have access to communication facilities, to communicate with the people making the decisions that affect them.

Sadly, rarely do people in Nigeria participate in decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives. Ifidon and Ahiauzu (2005), in their study of Niger Delta, revealed that inadequate communication and information flow is one factor responsible for communal conflict in the area.

Unemployment: Unemployment is a hydra-headed monster which exists among the youth in all developing countries. Experts believe that the number of jobless youth is twice as high as official estimate. Ozohu-Suleiman (2006) notes Nigerian youths are trapped by unemployment. Zakaria (2006) believes that the rising tide of unemployment and the fear of a bleak future among the youth in African countries have made them vulnerable to the manipulations of agents' provocateurs. These include aggrieved politicians, religious demagogues, and greedy multinationals that employ these youths to achieve their selfish ambitions. Zakaria (2006) strongly believes that the absence of job opportunities in developing countries is responsible for youth restiveness with disastrous consequences.

Bad Governance: Good governance is required for the growth and development of any nation. Unfortunately, in Nigeria bad governance is more common than good, resulting in disjointed development. The World Bank (1992) identifies the main characteristics of bad governance to include:

- failure to properly distinguish between what is public and what is private, leading to private appropriation of otherwise public resources;
- inability to establish a predictable frame work for law and government behaviour in a manner conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of laws and rules;
- excessive rules, regulations, licensing requirement and so forth which impede the functioning of markets and encourage rent-seeking;
- priorities that are inconsistent with development, thereby resulting in misallocation of national resources; and
- exceedingly narrow base for, or non-transparent, decision making.

These and more are the features of most administration in Nigeria. For instance, Onyekpe (2007) observes that successive administrations in Nigeria have not allocated much to the needs of the youth, and, worse still, the meagre allocation are often diverted by government officials to their private accounts and

projects. Thus, youth are restive and agitated when they perceive that resources meant for public are being wasted by those in authority.

Poverty: Poverty connotes inequality and social injustice and this traumatizes the poor. More than 70 percent of people in Nigeria are in abject poverty, living below the poverty line, and one-third survive on less than US \$1 dollar a day (Zakaria, 2006). This figure includes an army of youth in urban centres in Nigeria who struggle to eke out a living by hawking chewing sticks, bottled water, handkerchiefs, belts, etc. The sales-per-day and the profit margin on such goods are so small that they can hardly live above the poverty line. Disillusioned, frustrated, and dejected, they seek an opportunity to express their anger against the state. Aworawo (2000) and Zakaria (2006) agreed that there is a link among poverty, loss of livelihood, inequality, and youth restiveness as evidenced by the numerous violent protests against the wielders of power in Nigeria.

Inadequate Educational Opportunities and Resources: Quality education has a direct bearing on national prestige, greatness, and cohesion. The knowledge and skill that young people acquire help determine their degree of patriotism and contribution to national integration and progress. Between 2000 and 2004, about 30 percent of Nigerian youth between 10 and 24 were not enrolled in secondary school (Population Reference Bureau, 2006). Perhaps the prohibitive cost of acquiring education is responsible.

The after effect of this situation is that thousands of young people roam the streets in cities in Nigeria. Those who manage to complete secondary school have no opportunities for tertiary education. Having being denied the chance to reach their potential, they are disorientated and readily available for antisocial actions (Onyekpe, 2007). Worse still, some who struggle to enrol in various educational institutions drop out due to lack of basic learning facilities. This situation is attributable to the dwindling resources of government at both federal and state levels as a result of an economic meltdown.

Lack of Basic infrastructure: Most rural communities and urban slums in Nigeria have no access to potable water, health facilities, electricity, communication facilities, industries and commercial facilities, etc. Behind social unrest in the country is the agitation for equitable distribution of resources.

IV. Resultant Effects of Social Ills

The dictum that youth are the leaders of tomorrow has remained as relevant as ever. But with the current happenings in the country, there are genuine fears that many of them may not be able to take up their rightly position in the society. Some of them in Nigeria, as a result of peer pressure and negligence by parents and government, have resorted to pandering towards social vices which have ruined the lives of many of them in all parts of the country. Investigation reveal that these youths were either lured into such behaviours while many of them, as a result of neglect by parents and in the name of fending for themselves engage in social vices ranging from prostitution, gangsterism, sexual harassment, examination malpractices to cultism and drug abuse among others.

Social problems adversely affect our society. One of the major effects is that our harmony is distributed and in its stead in the society there is hostility and suspicion. These also result in large-scale social dissatisfaction and create suffering and misery. On the whole social problems do not all help in solving any problem but create problems of serious magnitude, which is disadvantageous to the whole society (Bhatti, 2009).

Social problems operate a revolving-door policy these days. As soon as one goes away, another turns up. According to Iranin, (2009) people are fighting to get to the top, one competition after another. Then, life is a race, if you're slow; you're going to get trampled. However the desire to win may give rise to a new problem – social ills. Social ills include bullying, discrimination, drugs and alcohol abuse, smoking and vandalism. They are referred to as 'social problems' because they prevent people from living harmoniously in a society. Despite the many social ills involving teenagers, social ills also occur amongst adults such as criminal breach of trust, corruption, the occurrence of cheating in marriage, gambling, stealing, etc.

Research conducted by Stephen (2008) shows that negative effects of social problems include poverty and disease as leading problems that are compounded by poor sanitation, unclean water, and inadequate housing. Other social problems are prenatal and maternal conditions, malaria and pneumonia.

Theoretical Framework: Teacher Education

Teacher professionalism is at a threshold. Moral purpose, social change and attitudinal change are implicit in what good teaching and effective change are about, but as yet they are society's (and teaching's) great untapped resources for radical and continuous improvement. Schlechty (1990) argued that for professional teacher to be effective, he must become a career-long learner of more sophisticated pedagogies and technologies and be able to form and reform productive collaborations with colleagues, parents, community agencies,

businesses, and others. The teacher of the future, in other words, must be equally at home in the classroom and in working with others to bring about continuous improvements.

Teacher education has the honour of being the worst problem and the best solution in education. The absence of a strong publicly stated knowledge base allows the misconception to continue that any smart person can teach (Kramer, 1992). Teacher educators like others to be change agents must take some initiative themselves. For example in 1991 at the University of Toronto a paper for strategic planning committee was taken as a starting point on the following premise: *Faculties of Education should not advocate things for teachers or schools that they are not capable of practicing themselves*. Using a hypothetical “best faculty of education in the country” metaphor, it suggested that such a faculty would:

1. commit itself to producing teachers who are agents of educational and social improvement,
2. commit itself to continuous improvement through program innovation and evaluation,
3. value and practice exemplary teaching,
4. engage in constant inquiry,
5. model and develop lifelong learning among staff and students,
6. model and develop collaboration among staff and students,
7. be respected and engaged as a vital part of the university as a whole,
8. form partnerships with schools and other agencies,
9. be visible and valued internationally in a way that contributes locally and globally,
10. work collaboratively to build regional, national, and international networks (Fullan 1991).

Key Elements for Teacher Education

In an attempt to make teacher education a first class-field in fixing social ills, there is every need to redesign the entire teacher program. Every teacher should be knowledgeable about, committed to, and skilled in:

1. working with *all* students in an equitable, effective, and caring manner by respecting diversity in relation to ethnicity, race, gender, and special needs of each learner;
2. being active learners who continuously seek, assess, apply, and communicate knowledge as reflective practitioners throughout their careers;
3. developing and applying knowledge of curriculum, instruction, principles of learning, and evaluation needed to implement and monitor effective and evolving programs for all learners;
4. initiating, valuing, and practicing collaboration and partnerships with students, colleagues, parents, community, government, and social and business agencies;
5. appreciating and practicing the principles, ethics, and legal responsibilities of teaching as a profession;
6. developing a personal philosophy of teaching which is informed by and contributes to the organizational, community, societal, and global contexts of education (University of Toronto, B.Ed. Restructuring Committee, 1992b).

To this end, Colleges of Education must redesign their programs to focus directly on developing the beginner's knowledge base for effective teaching *and* the knowledge base for changing the conditions that affect teaching. The new standard for the future is that every teacher must strive to become effective at managing change (Goodlad, 1991). It is worth noting that restructuring has caused changes in participation, in governance, and in other formal aspects of the organization, but in the majority of cases, it has not affected the teaching-learning core and professional culture (Berends 1992, Fullan 1993).

This leads to the idea of interactive professionalism which is the basis of attitudinal change in the learners. Beyond better pedagogy, the teacher of the future must actively improve the conditions for learning in his or her immediate environments. Put one way, teachers will never improve learning in the classroom unless they also help improve conditions that surround the classroom. The following guidelines were developed for action consistent with this new conception of “interactive professionalism”:

1. locate, listen to, and articulate your inner voice;
2. practice reflection in action, on action, and about action;
3. develop a risk-taking mentality;
4. trust processes as well as people;
5. appreciate the total person in working with others;
6. commit to working with colleagues;
7. seek variety and avoid balkanization;
8. redefine your role to extend beyond the classroom;
9. balance work and life;
10. push and support principals and other administrators to develop interactive professionalism;
11. commit to continuous improvement and perpetual learning;

12. monitor and strengthen the connection between your development and students' development (Fullan and Hargreaves 1991).

Above all, there is need for action that links initial teacher preparation and continuous teacher development based on moral purpose, social change and attitudinal change with the corresponding restructuring of colleges of education with their relationships. Systems don't change by themselves. Rather, the actions of individuals and small groups working on new conceptions intersect to produce breakthroughs (Fullan 1993). New conceptions, once mobilized, become new paradigms. The new paradigm for teacher professionalism synthesizes the forces of moral purpose, social change and attitudinal change.

Significance of Teacher Education in Curbing Social Ills

In spite of all the negative experience of the past from colonialism to Neo-colonialism as manifested in poor leadership, military dictatorship and increasing poverty of the land; people should strive for a global citizenship which connotes a body of knowledge and skills that reflect in moral purpose, social change, attitudinal change and teaching profession will be the key to global understanding in this century.

Curriculum was written and skill training becomes an integral part of the system. The people of the past centuries will be removed hopefully in the century when children have learned that they should be the best of whatever they are, whether teachers, mechanics, accountants, doctors or carpenters. Social change and Attitudes development thus become a primary focus of citizenship in this present dispensation in the future.

It is very important to emphasize therefore, that our children will need to learn to handle their feelings satisfactorily. This can be accomplished effectively by developing such traits that would enhance positive attitudinal changes as for example:

- Willingly to value and respect all people regardless of their origins and ways of life
- Awareness of our cultural heritage and respect for that of others.
- The willingness to respect all forms of cultural expression
- Willingly to mediate differences through dialogue rather than through conflict which recently has tended to pose the problem of governance in our country and causing a lot of youth restiveness, political intolerance and social ills.
- Willingly to share experience, acquire new knowledge and then apply them to a better understanding of the world.
- Appreciation of the worth and dignity of others.

Undoubtedly, Nigeria will never experience peace unless Nigerians learn to understand and forgive shortcoming of others. Every individual or ethnic or religious group has worth. Unless that is realized, feelings of inferiority and worthlessness will remain. Sound mental attitudes are the grounds from which all effective conduct of living springs. All children need a proper frame of mind to confronting and unsuccessfully dealing with otherwise insurmountable problems they will encounter in the coming decades. It is on this basis that moral education teaches children in a manner that will help them develop variously as moral, civic, good, mannered, behaved, non-bullying, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant and/ or socially acceptable beings.

Given the functionalist view of the needs of the social system to an assessment of the contribution made by education to the maintenance of value consensus and social solidarity, Durkheim (1951) saw the major function of education as the transmission of society's norms and values. Stressing that society can survive only if these exists among its members as sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands. Without these 'essential similarities', cooperation, social solidarity and social life itself would be impossible.

A vital task for all societies is the welding of a mass of individuals into a united whole, in other words the creation of social solidarity. This involves a commitment to society, a sense of belonging and a feeling that the social unit is more important than the individual. Durkheim's view has been illustrated by educational practices in the USA. The common educational curriculum has helped to instil shared norms and values into a population with diverse backgrounds. It has provided a shared language and a common history for immigrants from every country in Europe.

According to Durkheim (1951),

“...education teaches individuals specific skills necessary for their future occupations. This function is particularly important in industrial society with its increasingly complex and specialized division labour. In industrial society, social solidarity is based on the interdependence of specialized skills, school provide both general values necessary for homogeneity and social survival and specific skills which provide the necessary diversity for social cooperation”.

To maintain social orderliness, it could be argued that greater stress should be placed on the social roles, duties and responsibilities of the individuals within the society. Hargreaves (1991) says "to acquire dignity a person must achieve a sense of competence of making a contribution to and of being valued by the group to which he or she belongs." He argues further that many schools fail to produce a sense of dignity for working class peoples. In case of failure in any exam, the student may form subcultures which reject the values of the school and therefore of the wider society.

This perspective explains why some people benefit more from the education system while some others do not benefit. Aggressive and creative students are always heavily punished since they want to do something different. The education thus aims to produce unimaginative and unquestioning work force which could be easily exploited and manipulated by employers. Then, education output has effect on social goals.

Therefore relating this to the educational sector, our educational sector has been beclouded with social ills. What is said to be ivory tower or citadel of learning has been turned in to a breeding ground for hoodlums, rapist, prostitute, etc. The educational system is losing its moral and social values. Teacher education must be alive to salvage teaching profession. "Moral" is one of those overarching concepts that is the subject of disciplines from philosophy to theology, from psychology to sociology.

Moral/Character as it relates to moral education most often refers to how 'good' a person is. In other words, a person who exhibits personal qualities like those a society considers desirable might be considered to have good character and developing such personal qualities is often seen as a purpose of education. Durkheim posits that students would learn to exercise self-discipline not just because they wanted to avoid punishment, but also because they would come to see that misbehavior damaged society as a whole and the child learns to understand the rational basis on which society was organized.

V. Recommendations

This paper emphasized moral purpose, social change and attitudinal change that must be grounded on basic concepts and a set of skills that cut across disciplines that children pass through, undergoing various trainings and programs while growing up. The most fundamental of these concepts is that all persons are born equal regardless of sex, religion, ethnics, class, or association they belong therefore; it is unethical and unjust to classify nations by such superficial differences as skin colour. In Nigeria the major ethnic group should not superimpose their cultural beliefs, religion and their overall perception of life and survival to others like the majority groups, neither will the majority groups over react with God-given gifts of crude oil to stifle the economy of the country through the over politicized resources control drive, not minding the issue of interdependence.

With this therefore, children must be made to understand that equality of person is very important for social peace and social justice to reign on this planet. In Nigeria, equality is being denied a lot in educational, political, economic and other aspects of human endeavours, the allocation and distribution of national resources is negatively skewed and the privileged few appropriate all these for themselves at the detriment of the majority who are the down-trodden masses of the society. These are the root causes of social problems in our dear country.

The concepts should be studied by our children through the help of competent and unbiased teacher at increasing levels of difficulty for reinforcement and better understanding for the good of the society. The following are recommended to help children cope with immediate and global problems:-

(a) Identify pride in self-worth regardless of race, colour, or creed, discrimination will disappear from society when persons are judged not by skin colour, ethnic groups, or the class to which they belong, but by their ability and integrity.

(b) Conflict begins at home; children should learn that conflicts are to be resolved through dialogue and eventual consensus. This can only take place or be properly assimilated when the adult populations desist from such behaviour which has become very endemic and sometimes it has been noted that most of the conflicts involving youths in our society are engineered or fuelled by our adult population for their selfish gain. The various wars now on conflict resolution can be attained if we exercise restraints in our life styles.

(c) Freedom and Choice; as a person they will need to value others, freedom and society it was adduced to be more of military administration but unfortunately in this present dispensation of democracy, the civil society is yet to cherish open and unobstructed freedom and choice of the ruling class or even parity. Thus it becomes very pertinent to reemphasizes the essence of this not only to our children but especially our adult population.

(d) Change; accepting the changing world and learning to adjust and adapt to it is very necessary for the survival of individuals and the nations at large, supporting above, Ogunsanya (1988) sees social studies as the study of total way of a person, their adjustment patterns, and their place in a rapidly changing world community.

(e) Interdependence; children need to begin to understand this concept from within the family unit and then extend it to the community and the wider world. Society becomes truly meaningful if this concept is soundly developed. Hence, the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a cultural diverse democratic system in an interdependent world tends to be the primary purpose of teacher education. It should be noted that without teaching profession, our democracy is lost.

(f) Justice discriminatory practice everywhere especially on women, less privilege and minorities must be eliminated to create harmony of co-existence and cooperation. Specifically women should be given equal opportunities and pay for the work they do. Our men should be more responsible. In family affairs and other issues gender balance.

This list of concepts is not exhaustive, but only suggestive of the kinds of basic understandings students from primary to the tertiary level must learn and have to become fully functioning citizens. They learn to apply these concepts in their daily lives. In addition to the above, there are necessary skills that would facilitate their development contrary to social vices and give them ability and motivation to think critically about the world around them.

VI. Conclusion

Based on this study, education is the cause of social ills! That is because problems arise when education itself is misinterpreted. We cannot just simply cram bundles of information into our minds. However, if education is properly utilized then we learn to evaluate what we see and hear. The more educated a person is, the better he/she behaves. Well-educated people tend to realise that being part of social ills is a distraction, and that they are better off doing something much more useful and productive.

Education plays an important role in curbing social problems. Therefore, we must be quick, vigilant, and determined to change any negative opinions of education. For example, schools can hold awareness programmes, especially on issues like war/conflict, election, HIV/AIDS and global warming. Greater awareness of these issues will benefit the students by engaging them in the 'real situations' in life so they can be advocates of peace and order.

John (2005) education shapes the way I think and act. Education makes me a better person. It makes me realise that a better future lies ahead of me. I think education would do the same for others in order for us to maintain order in the society. As Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." I believe that through education, people will recognise that the goodness of one's existence is based on how education shapes them. Hence, teacher education program must be restructured in line with needs of the learner and society to improve upon their moral worthiness, character development/attitudinal change and mindset against all social illnesses.

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