



**TEACHER EDUCATION IN A DEPRESSED ECONOMY: IMPLICATIONS
FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AT THE BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL IN ENUGU
STATE**

Dr. Leo C. Chukwu

Department of Educational Management,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Agbani, Enugu

Rev. Fr. Dr. Basil Onyiah

Department of Educational Management,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology ESUT, Agbani, Enugu

Professor S.G.N. Eze

Department of Health and Physical Education,
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Agbani, Enugu

Abstract

The study investigated teacher education in a depressed economy and its implications for quality assurance at basic education level in Enugu State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. Instrument for data collection was a researcher developed instrument tagged Teacher education in a depressed economy questionnaire (TEDEQ). Two research questions guided the study. The instrument for data collection was validated by 3 experts from the Faculty of Education, ESUT. 2 of them are of the Department of Educational Management, while the remaining one was of the measurement and evaluation unit. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. Alpha value (cluster by cluster and the overall) yielded 0.69, 0.73 and 0.71 respectively, showing a high reliability of the instrument. Results of data analysis revealed a consensus amongst the respondents that the objectives of teacher education could be achieved in a depressed economy in Enugu State. In the same manner, quality assurance is also possible at the basic education, especially the junior secondary schools level. However, this is only possible through prudent application and management of available resources. Some recommendations were then put forward, including.

Key words: Teacher, education, quality assurance, basic education, prudence.

Introduction

The strategic place of education in the affairs of any society is never in doubt. This is because education ensures the emancipation of man from darkness to light and from the depths of poverty to the pinnate of prosperity. It is the most potent weapon that liberates man and his society from ignorance, disease, primitivity and backwardness (Chukwu, Eze and Agada, 2016) (Chukwu, 2015). In espousing the vital place of education in the life of men, Socrates (469 – 399 Bc), averred that the only good is knowledge, and the only evil is ignorance. Education remains the only vehicle for individual and society transformation (Chukwu, 2014). The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2013), recognizes education as an instrument par excellence for effecting national development.

Literature Review/Conceptual Framework

The teacher is someone who teaches. The teacher facilitates education through teaching and learning. The teacher is a repository of knowledge as he delivers quality instruction to the learners. He is a moral agent. The teacher also transmits lifelong skills to the learners. Apart from the learner, the teacher remains the most important single factor in any teaching learning relationship. (FRN, 2013). Explicating the indispensable place of the teacher in any educational enterprise, Sarganarayana (2010:1), asserts that;

The keystone in the educational edifice is doubtless the teacher. On him depends much more than any other, the progress and prosperity of children. Nobody can effectively take his place or influence children in the manner and to the degree; it is possible for him alone to do. It is strongly believed that to be a teacher is to be the member of a holy order.

The foregoing, lays bare the prime place of the teacher in any educational enterprise. As an agent of morals, worthwhile knowledge and skills, the teacher must be of quality a performance and a model. The teacher must have the capacity to deliver and must deliver quality instruction to the learner in order to remain relevant and deserve truly to be called a teacher. In this wise therefore, teacher education become very important.

Paul in Abdulgaffar, Tinja and Bulama (2013), conceptualizes teacher education as policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their task effectively in the classroom, schools and the wider community. Teacher education is a form of education designed to grow those who teach, or would like to teach or be engaged in relevant professional services to our schools, colleges and ministries of education (Aleyideino, 2002). It is that formal education meant to give practical and applied skills to would be teachers.

From the foregoing, it is safe to conclude that teacher education is a programme of action that is carefully planned to train people for professional development in the realm of teaching and learning. The main objective of teacher education therefore is:

To provide qualitative teachers for all levels of the Nigerian schools system. Thus, teachers' professional development would go a long way in effecting positive attitudes, skills and worth-while orientation the Nigeria citizens require for national productivity and sustainable economy as prerequisite for global competitiveness (Abdulgaffar, Tinja and Bulama, 2013:712).

In recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. The goals of teacher education shall be to:

- Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
- Further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- Help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- Enhance teachers' commitment to their teaching profession (FRN, 2004:39).

The following institutions train teachers for all levels of the educational system in Enugu State; Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu, Enugu State College of Education (Technical), Enugu, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Federal College of Education, Eha Amufu. There are many other private institutions that offer teacher education programmes in the State.

Basic education is the foundation for the rest of the educational system. It forms the foundation for lifelong learning that provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. Iweama (2012) posits that basic means that on which every other thing rests. It is the root, bottom or the foundation from which other parts get support. It means that basic education is the starting point of acquisition of knowledge, without it, acquiring other levels of education at the upper ladder of the educational system will not be possible. Adewole (2003), maintains that basic education is that education that help an individual to function effectively within the society. It is education essential for life (Enoch, 2000). Basic education is therefore that education which ensures that the individual cannot only read and write, but become an effective, functional and contributing member of his or her society.

Basic education is aimed at equipping individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them;

- a) live meaningful and fulfilling lives;
- b) contribute to development of the society;
- c) derive maximum social, economic and cultural benefits from society, and
- d) Discharge their civic obligations completely (Ebenebe in Chukwu, 2013:125).

In Nigeria and Enugu State in particular, basic education constitutes the first nine years of continuous schooling and is for children of age 6-15years (FRN, 2013). Basic education it must be clearly and unambiguously stated is very strategic to the success or failure of the rest of the educational system and thence to the development and growth of the Nigeria society and Enugu State in particular.

Quality assurance is the fitness of an organization in accomplishing the goals for which it is established, and also maintaining comparable standards (Anashie and Ikwen 2013). Quality assurance is any system which examines the aims, content, resources, levels and projected outcomes of modules, programmes and courses organized to maintain quality. Quality assurance therefore plays not only the role of accountability but also that of standardization, evaluation and improvement of quality (Nwahunanya, 2008).

Quality assurance is the strategy for ensuring quality in the input and output of any organization including the basic education sub sector. Ezekiel Hart (2003), emphasizes that quality assurance in basic education is directed at quality planning and organizing, teaching and learning, classroom management, outcomes and products. It remains therefore a total and holistic process of ensuring integrity of outcome.

From the foregoing, it is clear that quality teacher education is a sine qua non for quality assurance at the basic education level particularly at the upper basic education level (Junior Secondary JS 1 – 3), which is the focus of the present study. It is uncertain however whether quality teacher education and quality assurance are possible at the basic education in a depressed economy in Enugu State. This is the problem of the present study.

Theoretical Underpinning

The study is anchored on Henry # Fayol's modern operational management theory published in 1916. As outlined in Uzoma (2014), the model guides the actions, practices and conduct of personnel in an organization. Fayol advanced the following guidelines for effective and efficient realization of organizational goals;

- Delegation of authority and responsibility
- Equity

- Unity of command
- Humanitarian principle
- Division of labour and specialization
- Discipline

For organizational success, especially in the school system, discipline is a key ingredient that must be imbibed by all member of the school system from the principal down to the students.

Discipline is doing what is right at all times. It connotes obedience to organizational rules.

The prudential principle which is relevant to the present study is anchored on fiscal discipline. This principle maintains that the principal should be able to anticipate, determine, arrange, use and control the material and human resources within the school carefully to achieve desired goals. It entails a high level of fiscal discipline in the application and management of finances, thereby checking corruption and wastages. This is very good for the achievement of both the goals of teacher education and quality assurance at the basic education level in Enugu State.

Research Questions

1. How can the objectives of teacher education be achieved in a depressed economy in Enugu State?
2. How can quality assurance be achieved in Junior Secondary Schools in Enugu State in a depressed economy?

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study using a researcher developed instrument tagged: Teacher education in a depressed economy questionnaire (TEDEQ).

Population for the Study

The population for the study involved all 287 principals of all the secondary school in Enugu State, including all the 8,909 teachers in all the Secondary Schools. This makes a total of 9,196 respondents used for the study.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Because of the manageable population, all the 287 principals were used for the study. However 10% of the teachers were randomly sampled, giving a sample size of 891 teachers used for the study. A return rate of 93% was recorded for the distributed questionnaire, for the teachers, making 828 teachers. Also 95% return rate was recorded for the principals giving a total of 275 principals. In all 1103 respondents (principals and teachers) returned their questionnaire. This makes a combined return rate of 94% for all the respondents.

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument for the study was face validated by three experts; two in Educational Management and one in Measurement and Evaluation. All the experts are from the Faculty of Education, ESUT, Agbani Enugu. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha. This followed the trial testing of the instrument using 20 respondents (principals and teachers) in Ebonyi State. Alpha values (cluster by cluster) was found to be 0.67, 0.73 and 0.71 overall. This shows that the instrument was highly reliable for the study.

The research questions were answered using mean and grandmean ratings. The instrument was prepared based on the four point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point. The mean was determined thus:

$$\frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50 \text{ Average}$$

This meant that any mean of 2.50 and above represented “agree”, while less than 2.50, represented “disagree”.

Table 1: Mean ratings and grand mean of respondents on achieving the objectives of teacher education in a depressed economy in Enugu State.
N = 1103 respondents

S/N	Items	X	Decision
Objectives of teacher education could be achieved in a depressed economy in Enugu State through:			
1.	prudent application of available funds to check wastages	2.72	A
2.	prudent management of available funds to check corruption	3.05	A
3.	provision of requisite facilities in such schools	2.91	A
4.	adequate maintenance of school plant	2.69	A
5.	motivating the teachers in such schools adequately	3.17	A
6.	awarding scholarships to deserving and brilliant students	3.00	A
7.	awarding scholarship to deserving indigent students	2.93	A
8.	Continuous training and retraining for the lecturers through seminar and workshops so they could give the best to the student teachers	2.68	A
Grand Mean		2.89	A

Table 1 reveals that the respondents agreed with all the items as far as achieving the objectives of teacher education was concerned even in a depressed economy in Enugu State. A grand mean of 2.89 confirms this. This means that even in a depressed economy, a lot could be done in achieving the all-important objectives of teacher education. This could be done through prudent application and management of available funds.

Table 2: Mean ratings and grand mean of respondents on achieving quality assurance at the basic education level in a depressed economy in Enugu State

N = 1103 respondents

S/N	Items	X	Decision
Quality assurance is possible at the basic education level in Enugu State through: in a depressed economy			
9.	prudent application of available funds to check wastages	2.66	A
10.	prudent management of available funds thereby checking corruption	2.81	A
11.	provision of requisite facilities in those schools	3.02	A
12.	adequate maintenance of school plant	2.69	A
13.	motivating the teachers adequately	2.74	A
14.	continuous training and retraining of the teachers through workshops, seminars and conferences	2.89	A
15.	Effective and constant instructional supervision to ensure quality instructional delivering in the schools	2.97	A
Grand Mean		2.86	A

Table 2 above shows that the respondents were unanimous in agreeing that quality assurance is achievable at the basic education level in a depressed economy in Enugu State through prudent application and management of available funds, provision of requisite facilities in the various schools and adequate maintenance of school plant. Others include; teacher motivation, continuous training and retraining of teachers and then effective instructional supervision. A grandmean of 2.86 confirms this.

Findings of the Study

The present study found that;

1. the noble objectives of teacher education are achievable in Enugu State despite the present economic downturn
2. Despite the present economic quagmire, quality assurance is achievable and sustainable at the basic education level and indeed other levels of education in Enugu State.

Discussion of the Findings

The study found that the objectives of teacher education could be achieved in Enugu State despite the present economic crunch. This is same with quality assurance at the basic education level. However, the above is only possible with prudence in the application and management of available resources, which include human, material and finance. Chukwu (2015) harps on the indispensability of finance and other resources in the achievement of educational goals and objectives. Ijiga (2009), maintains that it is imperative that these resources are provided so that the objectives of education are achieved.

The findings of the present study are equally in line with the prudential principle as espoused by Fayol in Uzoma (2014). This principle promotes the ability to anticipate, determine, arrange, use and control the material and human resources within organizational disposal carefully to achieve desired objectives. Prudential principle entails careful, efficient and effective management.

Prudential principle abhors and checks corruption in all its ramifications. It involves careful and efficient maintenance of school plant and equipment. It involves discipline, equity and justice including motivation of staff. All these ensure that wastages are reduced to the barest minimum thereby enhancing the realization of organizational goals.

From the foregoing, it is clear that what is needed in Enugu State and indeed elsewhere is prudent application and management of available human and material resources, including finance. Enugu State is hugely blessed with abundant human and material resources which if effectively utilized, can help in not only achieving the objectives of teacher education, but ensure quality at the basic education sub-sector especially Junior Secondary schools.

Conclusion

The teacher is strategically placed in any teaching learning relationship. He (the teacher) therefore determines to a great extent the quality or otherwise in any educational system and thence any economy. The basic education sector is the foundation of other levels of education. It follows therefore that prudent application and management of available resources (human and otherwise) is imperative to ensure success in both the teacher education programme of Enugu State and its basic education sector. This becomes even more compelling in this period of economic quagmire in Enugu State occasioned by many factors including dwindling resources.

Recommendations

The following are recommended.

1. Prudent application and management of available funds to check wastages and corruption.
2. Proper maintenance of school plant to avoid decay
3. Constant workshops and seminars on effective management practices of human, material and financial resources. Seminars and workshops on fiscal discipline are also imperative.

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