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## TEACHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO NIGERIAN TEACHER EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the structure, operation and achievements of Teacher Education in France and its relevance to the Nigerian Teacher Education System. Since Education provides the individual with a means of becoming a useful member of the society, Nigeria as a developing nation has a lot to learn from Teacher Education in France.*

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the aims, structure, operation and achievements of Teacher-Education in France and its relevance to the Nigerian Teacher-Education System. Education provides the individual with a means of becoming a useful member of the society. Teachers are the backbone of this education, it is necessary that a person who wishes to teach should be well educated, hence the need for sound training. Most teacher-training programmes include three areas of concentration:

- [1] General education in academic subjects
- [2] Subject-matter specialization
- [3] Professional education

The greatest reward of a teacher is to watch students achieve success and to know he has helped enrich another person's life. It would be nice if every teacher education programme should assist the trainees to achieve this objective.

### OPERATION OF TEACHER-EDUCATION IN FRANCE

#### 1. The Educational System in France

The educational system in France comprises of public schools run by the state and private or independent schools that belong to private persons or religious organizations.

Most of the public schools are under the control of the Ministry of National Education some of them come under other ministries. This is true of agricultural schools, the state higher professional schools like engineers, special schools for the disabled, rehabilitation schools and the system of the overseas territories and French educational institutions in foreign countries. Education is free for all citizens and it is divided into progressive stages. Public education in France is centralized and falls under the Ministry of National Education. Each branch of education is administered by a directorate of its own, which supervises teaching staff and

equipment. Each is in charge of a rector who represents the Minister and acts on behalf of all the directorates of the Ministry.

The recruitment and training of teachers are uniform for the country. The state alone has the right to grant certificates and degrees, even for pupils in private schools.

## 2. THE STAGES OF TEACHER-EDUCATION IN FRANCE

[a] "Ecoles" "Normales" which is the primary Teacher-Training Schools is the first stage. At this stage students spend two years in preparing for the baccalaureate and two other years in professional training. They undergo competitive examination in general subjects like psychology, teaching methods and one month teaching practice each term. At the end of the course a teacher's certificate [Certificate de fins d'etudes normales] is awarded to the students.

### [b] Teacher for Special Education

Teachers are qualified by a special certificate for the following schools:

- [i] Open air schools set up in the country side for sickly children who are free of infectious diseases. The classes are small and an important place is given to medical and corrective gymnastics.
- [ii] Schools for backward and abnormal children [e'coles de Perfectionnement] are established by the Primary Education Directorate, for the crippled, backward and abnormal children. Some independent schools have boarding facilities. The children are not more than 15 in a class for easy supervision. Manual work and domestic tasks occupy a large place in the teaching, which is directed towards developing each pupil's abilities to the full.

### [c] Technical Teacher Training Schools

Vocational education is one of the branches of national education. Its general purpose is to serve the needs of Commerce and Industry. The staffs of technical schools and colleges are trained in

- [i] The Senior Technical Teacher-Training Schools
- [ii] The National Teacher-Training Schools for apprentices
- [iii] The National Institute for Labour and Vocational Guidance

The three objectives of vocational education are:

- [i] Training of qualified workers for industry and commerce
- [ii] Training of middle ranks of industry and commerce for supervisory functions
- [iii] Training of higher ranks in commerce, engineering, arts and crafts and applied science.

### [d] Agricultural Education

The National School for Education in Rural Home Economics trains the staff for agricultural schools. The agricultural education is a sort of extension work designed to complete the vocational and general education of young people leaving the primary school and is suited to local living condition and seasonal needs. There

are four national schools of agriculture, which recruit students by competitive examination after the baccalaureate.

The course is largely practical and experimental. At the end of the course the students are awarded the diploma of agricultural engineer.

### [e] Physical Education Teachers

Physical Education teachers are trained in the two senior training schools for physical education where the course lasts for three years. Assistant receives a one-year course in training schools for physical education. Preparatory courses for these training schools are given by regional centers, which also train coaches and other staff for sports clubs. Physical education is compulsory for all pupils of both sexes.

### [f] Secondary School Teachers

Secondary School Teachers must have their areas of specialization. This category of teachers must have at least the [licence d'enseignement]. The professors must have passed the competitive qualifying examination for secondary school teaching, which make them become "professeurs certifie's".

### [g] The Teaching Staff in Public Primary Schools

The public primary school teacher must be a French citizen by birth or must have been naturalized for at least five years. He must be at least 18 years of age and possess a qualifying certificate either the [baccalaureat or brevet superieur]. He must be certified free from any infirmity, disease or constitutional defect incapacitating him from the exercise of the profession. Candidates for primary teaching posts can qualify either by attending a teacher training college or by acting as auxiliary teachers [remplacants], students may be admitted into the teacher training colleges at two levels.

- [i] Holders of the lower secondary school certificate, who are over 15 years and are under 17 years of age on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January of the year in which the competitive entrance examination is held; are admitted to classes which prepare them within a period of two to three years for the baccalaureate.
- [ii] Students who have already obtained the baccalaureate and are over 17 years old are admitted to two years of professional training. Their syllabus has two essentials parts

[a] Instruction in the theory of Education and Child Psychology.

[b] Teaching practice, which includes practical exercises and practice courses in class teaching and giving actual lessons. On leaving the teacher training college, a graduate is appointed on probation. During the first term of the school year, he undergoes the practical test for the certificate d'aptitude pedagogique [CAP]. He is appointed an established teacher on 1<sup>st</sup> January of the following year, provided he is aged 20.

This is the quickest way of entering the profession. It provides the best training

and has the advantage of being free of charge.

Supply teachers are men and women teachers who replace teachers on leave or occupy posts which are temporarily vacant. These supply teachers [remplacants] are distinct from substitute teachers [suppl'ants, maitres auxiliaires] or teachers on contract. The latter are recruited in exceptional cases, by the "inspecteurs d'acadmie" when a teacher on leave cannot be replaced owing to the fact that all the supply teachers are already engaged in teaching or in probationary work. These substitute teachers must satisfy the same condition as the supply teachers. They must pass a medical and radiological examination. They must not have been convicted for any offence. A supply teacher must wait for five years before being established and he must not hold [CAP]. He can sit for the written examination if he is aged 20 and has done paid service in the replacement of other teachers for 240 days over a period of two years. The written examination consists of an essay in French on a subject connected with education or teaching.

The practical examination consists of three hours of teaching, which must include physical education and singing, and three oral tests on school administration, marking of pupils' exercise books and practical teaching. Candidates must obtain the pass mark for each of these four tests.

#### **EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND STATUS OF TEACHERS**

Teachers enjoy the same security and system of retirement as civil servants. Promotion is partly dependent on the individual, in terms of the reports made on him by the inspector-general, and the headmaster; but it is determined more by length of service, and this gives it, especially in the primary and secondary schools, a certain automatic quality. From the basic salaries of each teacher, a deduction of 6 per cent is made for the pensions contribution. Further deductions are also made for social insurance and, in most cases, for the Mutuelle Ge'nerale de l'Education Nationale [Teachers' friendly society].

Primary schools teachers, with the exception of substitute and supply teachers are housed free of charge or receive a housing allowance. The majority of head-teachers are accommodated free of charge on the school premises. Teachers in charge of a school with at least two classes are designated as head teacher [i.e. directeurs]. The head teachers remain in charge of their class and, in addition, are responsible for the keeping of the registers, the enrolment of new pupils and relations with the academic and municipal authorities as well as with parents. They are also responsible for the care of the school premises, furniture and equipment. They provide guidance for teachers who are just beginning their careers. In the larger schools, they are released from class teaching and can therefore devote themselves entirely to their administrative, educational and social functions.

The High Council for National Education is a final disciplinary court of appeal for teachers threatened with serious penalties. The administrative joints commissions,

on which teachers are represented, have the function of proposing to the Minister all administrative decisions regarding individual teacher's appointment, transfer, promotion and penalties. This system gives teachers a genuine independence, which is reflected in their teaching.

#### **THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE**

The greatest achievement in teacher education and education in general in France, is in the field of technology. France excels in thoroughness in the training of her teachers. Her curricula, recruitment and training of teachers are uniform.

France is unique in the provision made for teachers for special education who take care of the sickly, backward and abnormal children. Her agricultural education too is excellent. The idea of supply teachers is something that goes a long way to ensure that classes are not left without teachers at any time.

#### **RELEVANCE OF THESE ACHIEVEMENTS TO TEACHER-EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

Nigeria as a developing nation has a lot to learn from the Teacher-Education in France. Teacher Education is of great importance to the growth of education in a country and without schools, there can be no formal education. If you give a teacher a sound education and training you have definitely educated a whole nation. In Nigeria today, we have all realized that the educational systems handed over to us by the British, which were originally designed to train a small native bureaucracy could not serve our purpose. As a result, the Federal government has introduced the 6.3.3.4 educational systems, which is more adequate to serve our cultural, social, political and economic needs. This will assist us to speed up our technological growth to meet the modern world commitments. If we really want to have economic, scientific and technological advancement we must start from the grassroots, i.e., the primary schools. Before the schools can play this noble role successfully, there must be an effective and thorough Teacher Education programme. In the good old days, people used to say that a teacher should know ten times more than his pupils. In this scientific age, I think it is worthwhile for a teacher to know hundred times more than the pupils.

In achieving this goal, the minimum entry qualification to our Training Institutions for Primary School teachers should be a good pass in the West African School Certificate Examination; and the least qualified teachers in our primary school should be the NCE holder [National Certificate Holders]. The curricula in our primary schools should include science subjects and mathematics, which should be made compulsory, and a variety of optional subjects like art and music which will encourage artistic abilities and talents. All teacher-Training schools should be controlled at the Federal level with the same curricula and entry requirements. A teacher as an individual has many roles to play in the life of the school and the children he teaches.

He is a leader, a social worker, a psychologist, and a counselor. All university students wanting to make teaching a career should be made to obtain their honours degrees in their different disciplines and a year of methodology course and practice teaching at government expense. The B.A. and B.Sc. education programme should be for N.C.E. holders only.

In order to have the desired school certificate holders in our Teacher Training and Higher Institutions, our secondary school system must be completely overhauled. Functional laboratories with suitable equipment must be provided in each school. Science subjects, Mathematics and English must be made compulsory for all students. The schools must be adequately staffed and the environment made congenial to studies. Boarding schools should be reinstated where possible in order to be able to give the students adequate physical and moral training with a view to bringing up a healthy generation.

As a long time measure, the Federal Government should set up large comprehensive high schools, polytechnics and colleges of technology where students will be exposed to vocational, business and technical subjects. Higher standard of knowledge for instructing personnel should be sought by establishing Senior Technical Teacher Training College and Agricultural Teacher Training Centres. Nigeria with all her potentialities for agriculture should be able to provide agricultural education for boys and girls who aim to farm and do not wish to continue their general studies beyond the primary school stages as it is done in France. The course should be largely practical and experimental. With the government encouragement in form of loans, this scheme can help the country to be self sufficient in food production. Furthermore, Nigeria should borrow from France the idea of giving special education to her sickly, backward, abnormal and handicapped children. Special Teacher Training Colleges should be set up for this purpose in order to have the right type of teachers to help these children. In France these categories of children are given appropriate free education suited to the need of each child up to the university level. None of our citizens should be left out in our educational programmes. Each child, whatever his or her problems are, should be made to have that sense of belonging to the mother-land and should be given a chance to contribute his or her own quota to the progress of the nation. It is an open secret in our schools that children lose considerable number of study hours each year on account of maternity leave by the female teachers and other casual leaves due to other unavoidable circumstances. This deplorable aspect of our educational system will be phased out if the Federal Ministry of Education can adopt the idea of supply teachers as it is done in France.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers are the backbones of education all over the world. If our leaders are really serious in transforming the country into a technologically developed society, the programme must start with the training of well-qualified teachers. Since science

and mathematics students are very few in our secondary schools and higher institutions, scholarships should be given to all science students.

The Nigerian government should not relent in its effort to boost the teaching profession. The government is trying but much more needs to be done. If the country must be truly great, all her citizens must be given the opportunity to have good and appropriate education, before this can be achieved teachers at all levels must be adequately trained.

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