

Prospective Teachers' Awareness of Teacher Certification for Quality Assurance in Nigerian Education System

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Abstract

Teaching is a profession that produces other professions all over the world in which Nigeria is not an exception. The profession is adequately certified, regulated and licensed by Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria to ensure the quality and standard in the system. The prospective teachers of teacher educational institutions are important stakeholders trained to facilitate and enhance the effective teaching and learning processes in the classrooms but how far are the teachers aware of teacher certification. It becomes imperative to assess prospective teachers' awareness of teacher certification for quality assurance in the education system. The objectives of the study were to investigate prospective teachers' awareness of teacher certification, obligations of teachers under TRCN and, rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN for quality assurance in the sector. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select three hundred students in teacher educational institutions in Kwara State. A researcher-design questionnaire was used for data collection. The data collected were analysed using percentage and means ranking. The findings of the study showed that prospective teachers were aware of some of the activities of the TRCN towards teacher certification and obligations of teachers registered under TRCN. The finding of the study also revealed that prospective teachers were not aware of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN for quality assurance in the education system. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that prospective teachers should be provided with information and enlightenment about rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN. This serves as motivation and encouragement to the teachers.

Key-words: Teacher Certification, Prospective teachers, Awareness, Obligations and Registered teachers' rights and privileges

Introduction

Teaching is a legally recognized profession in Nigeria. It is a form of public service which requires teachers' expert knowledge and specialized skills acquired and maintained through rigorous and continuing study. It is a profession that requires some degree of learning and special training to be able to provide higher intellectual services that are beneficial to mankind, directly or indirectly. Teaching is characterized by long period of preparation; code of conduct and ethics; technical and specific methodology; practiced restricted to those certified; giving high priority to service; and set its own standards for training, examination, certification and admission into the profession (Jimoh, 2004). In this regard, Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria was established to strengthen and regulate the practices of the profession including qualification, professional conduct, legal requirements, obligations, rights and privileges of registered teachers. Establishment of the council revitalize the teacher education programmes in Nigeria. Teacher education is the programmes structured to equip prospective teachers with a series of teaching and learning activities that enable them to impart knowledge and practical skills to learners purposely for behavioural modification. It is programmes, policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they required to perform the task effectively in the classroom, school and wider community (Sanyal, 2013).

The educational institutions that train teachers include colleges of education, faculties of education, institute of education and teacher institutes among others. Many prospective teachers want to become a teacher, while others enter the field because they love a certain subject and want to share the experience with young ones at basic or senior secondary school levels of education. Some of the prospective teachers may be inspired by one of their teachers and want to give back their experiences by inspiring the next generation. Many teachers just love kids and enjoy helping them learn and grow in a caring environment. Teachers make a difference in learners' lives. As noble as teaching profession is, prospective teachers are expected to register with TRCN after the completion of the programmes like Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE), Degrees in Education, Postgraduate Degree in Education and other programmes that are recognized in the country. The prospective teachers are expected to register to benefit in the system as registered members with TRCN.

The Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) was established by the Act No 31 of 1993 purposely to bring about a rapid transformation of the teaching profession to the highest standards with respect to the quality of teacher education programmes, registration and licensing, professional conduct, induction and overall social status of teachers at all levels of the education system. The mandate of the council can be possible with a fundamental change in the attitudes, orientations, awareness and behaviour of teachers towards greater values, ideals and practices in education as obtains in other professions. The

council is responsible for determining who teachers are and what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered teachers; securing the establishment and maintenance of a register of teachers and the publication from time to time; regulating and controlling the teaching profession in all its aspects and ramifications as well as classifying from time to time members of the teaching profession according to their level of training and qualification. Furthermore, the council inducts prospective teachers to the noble profession after the completion of their programmes from different educational institutions after they have passed professional qualifying examination to assure quality in the education sector in the country (Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria, 2005). This process of registration, examination and certification of prospective teachers is referred to as teacher certification

Teacher certification is an academic process by which prospective teachers licensed to teach within a specialized area after the completion of required courses or a programme and other specified criteria in education. The process for certification and licensing of prospective educators is important to ensure that prospective teachers meet certain standards in their subject areas, pass required and compulsory courses and up to task in using appropriate and suitable teaching methods and other skills for effective teaching and learning in the classrooms. A certified teacher is a teacher who has undergone series of programmes in foundations of education, earned credentials from an authorized educational tertiary institutions and, registered and licensed by Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria or other teacher regulatory councils in world. No category of teachers is exempted from the regulations. It is recommended that all persons who perform jobs that rightly and legally constitute teaching as well as those who administer teaching and learning in the education system must be trained as teachers, registered and regulated legally as recognized teachers in Nigeria. Therefore, prospective teachers must register with TRCN.

The following criteria are highlighted by TRCN as pre-requisite for registration. Prospective teachers must pass a qualifying examination accepted by the council and complete the practical prescribed by the council, be of good character, have attained the age of twenty-one years, and not have convicted in Nigeria or elsewhere of an offense involving fraud or dishonesty (Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria, 2010). Teacher certification has become compulsory for all prospective teachers as Federal Government made the deadline for phase-outing quacks from the teaching profession 31st December, 2019. It was also confirmed by the registrar of the council that only certified teachers will be allowed in the classrooms from 2020.

The criteria are set to ensure standard and quality in the profession. Quality assurance is keen in teaching profession. TRCN has established many programmes to ensure the quality in the profession. The programmes include professional standards for Nigerian teachers,

2010; Policy on career path for the teaching profession in Nigeria, 2019; and Teachers code of conduct, 2005 among others. The programmes are designed purposely to strengthen the profession and ensure quality in Education. The benefits for registered teachers are beyond material gains. Certified teachers legally have freedom to participate in all TRCN activities that are open to members, professional salary scales, allowances and other benefits that may be secured by TRCN, and attach to their names, titles or prefixes as maybe determined by TRCN as identification of registered teachers (Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria, 2005).

Quality assurance in education is a process of improving the teaching and learning processes, methods, procedures, products as outcome of the processes. The government expects the graduates of the Faculties of Education to be well equipped with subject matters of their respective areas of specialization, relevant skills and values as well as positive contributions towards the development of education sector and Nigeria as a nation (Olokooba, Okunloye, Uyanne & Okafor, 2019). Quality assurance is process of improving the educational institutions to meet the need of effective use of manpower in relation to the quality of skills acquired by the prospective teachers and the expectation skills in the labour market (Oyebade, Oladipo, & Adetoro, 2008).

Quality assurance plays important role in the education institutions. Education institutions occupy a strategic position due to its foundational roles they play among other institutions within the country and in the world. The institutions are assigned the task of producing the teachers for primary and secondary education levels and also capacity building of all curriculum implementers at all levels of education system. Education of teachers is not only responsible for improvement of school education but also for preparing competent, committed and professionally well qualified teachers who can meet the demands of labour market and compete with other human resources in global environment. Research studies have showed impacts of the quality assurance on the teacher education, priority of the teacher education on the quality assurance and ways of improving the quality assurance in teacher education in the country (Okebukola, 2005; Oyebade, et al., 2008; & Olokooba, et al., 2019). The findings of the studies of Oyebade, et al., (2008) and Okebukola, (2005) revealed that educational background, proper coordination of examination and the spirit of research and creativity are high priority in quality assurance in teacher education.

In addition, Olokooba, et al., (2019) identified the intellectual and professional background adequate for their daily assignment; control the examination system with clear procedures couple with absolute confidentiality and impartiality; enhance their commitment to national objectives; and encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teacher education as the prominent qualities that teacher education in universities assured. However, Osuafor and Okafor (2015) discovered that majority of the secondary schools teachers were aware of

the benefits and ethical practices of teaching profession required of them but some of them were not highly committed to the practices. To reduce the unethical practices in this profession, prospective teachers need to be exposed to the practices and obligations of the profession while undergoing a programme in teacher education purposely to assure quality in the education system.

To ensure quality in education, Oyewumi and Fatoki (2015) identified six indices that produce quality education to be student standard achievement; quality of leadership and management; quality of teaching and learning; quality of the curriculum; quality of the care, guidance and support given to students; and outreach with parents, students and community. Kwara State Education Quality Assurance Bureau (KSEQAB) was established to support the improvement in the quality education provision in schools through supervision, inspection and the regular monitoring of schools in the state. Quality assurance in education improve teacher's content knowledge, skills, ethics of teaching, and enthusiasm for learning that promote high standard in Education. It also ensures competent and skilled teachers who inspire next generation on continuous learning and cultivates in learners rights value and attitudes that improve the standard well-being of people in the country (Olokooba, et al. 2019). The deadline for uncertified and unqualified teachers in the classrooms are numbered. As beginner, prospective teachers need to be aware of and oriented towards the functions and responsibilities of the TRCN, teachers' obligations as well as rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN as a regulatory council in the teaching profession.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What is the prospective teachers' awareness of teacher certification for quality assurance in Nigerian education system?
2. What is the prospective teachers' awareness about obligations of teachers under TRCN for quality assurance in Nigerian education system?
3. What is the prospective teachers' awareness of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN for quality assurance in Nigerian education system?

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was employed in this study and a questionnaire titled "Prospective Teachers' Awareness of Teacher Certification for Quality Assurance Questionnaire" (PTATCQAQ) was administered. The population of the study comprised prospective teachers in Nigeria. Sample of the study was students selected from federal, state and private universities, colleges of education and teacher institute in Kwara State. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select sixty final year undergraduates in a federal, twenty undergraduates in State and twenty undergraduates in private universities in the state. Fifty final year students were separately selected in a public and private college of

education while hundred final year students were also selected from Teacher Institute in Ilorin Centre using simple random sampling technique. The total of the respondents for the study was three hundred.

The instrument used in data collection was a questionnaire which consisted of twenty-two structured response items. Three research questions were raised and answered using mean and standard deviation. The section A of the questionnaire sought information on demographic characteristic of the respondents. Section B of the questionnaire contained twenty-two items with three sub-headings. The first sub-heading was on Awareness of Teacher Certification while second sub-heading was on Obligations of teachers under TRCN. The last sub-heading in section B was based on Rights and Privileges of registered teachers with TRCN with a modified 4Likert scaling of Extremely Aware (3), Moderately Aware (2), and Not Aware (1). The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by the two experts in Measurement and Test construction, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The reliability of the instrument was obtained through the test-retest method. The data collected were analysed using PPMC and a reliability index of 0.73 was obtained. It was considered moderate for the study. The mean of 2.0 and above indicate the high level of awareness while the mean of less than 2.00 indicate the low level of awareness of the items in the questionnaire.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the prospective teachers' awareness of teacher certification for quality assurance in Nigerian Education?

Table 1: Prospective Teachers' Awareness of Teacher Certification for Quality Assurance

S/N	Awareness of Teacher Certification for Quality Assurance	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1.	Registration and licensing of qualified teachers	1.94	0.25	2 nd
2.	Induction at point of graduation	1.98	0.13	1 st
3.	Conduct of Professional Qualifying Examinations	1.86	0.35	3 rd
4.	Continuing Professional Development Programme	1.27	0.44	7 th
5.	Publication of a register of qualified and licensed teachers in Nigeria in hard copies and available through the World Wide Web.	1.75	0.44	5 th
6.	Supervision of the courses and programs of teacher training institutions in Nigeria	1.82	0.39	4 th

7. Establishment of national minimum standards and execution of mandatory continuing professional development	1.35	0.48	6 th
8. Enforcement of professional ethics among teachers using the teachers investigating panel (TIP) and the Teachers Tribunal	1.22	0.41	8 th

Table 1 indicated that out of eight items that address prospective teachers' awareness of teacher certification for quality assurance, items 2, 1, 3 and 6 revealed that majority of prospective teachers were aware of some of the activities of the TRCN towards teacher certification as the items were ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th respectively. However, the least of the items was item 8. This implies that prospective teachers in various educational institutions were aware of the activities of the TRCN towards teacher certification for quality assurance in the sector.

Research Question 2: What is the prospective teachers' awareness about obligations of teachers under TRCN for quality assurance in Nigerian Education?

Table 2: Prospective Teachers' Awareness about Obligations of Teachers under TRCN for Quality Assurance?

S/N	Obligations of Teachers under TRCN for Quality Assurance	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1.	Teachers should have an enduring absolute commitment to the profession.	1.74	0.39	7 th
2.	Teachers should give maximum attention and responsibility to the profession.	0.78	0.46	5 th
3.	Teacher should render efficient and cost-effective professional service at all times.	0.47	0.41	8 th
4.	Teachers should aspire to make a successful career within the system.	1.86	0.17	2 nd
5.	Teacher should evaluate periodically the learners' performance.	1.87	0.18	1 st
6.	Teachers should be dedicated and faithful in all professional undertakings being punctual, thorough, conscientious and dependable.	1.80	0.41	4 th
7.	Teachers should render all professional assistance likely to enable learners to identify and excel in their skills.	1.85	0.21	3 rd
8.	Teachers should submit themselves to the Teachers' Investigation Panel and Teacher Disciplinary Committee as the need arises.	1.77	0.36	6 th

Table 2 showed eight items as responses of prospective teachers on their awareness about obligations of teachers under TRCN for quality assurance. Items 5, 4, 7 and 6 showed that majority of prospective teachers were aware of obligations of teachers registered under TRCN as the items were ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th respectively. However, the least of the items was item 3. This indicates that prospective teachers were aware of obligations of teachers before joining the labour market.

Research Question 3: What is the prospective teachers' awareness of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN for quality assurance in Nigerian Education?

Table 3: Prospective Teachers' Awareness of Rights and Privileges of Registered Teachers with TRCN for Quality Assurance

S/N	Rights and Privileges of Registered Teachers with TRCN	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1.	Freedom to legal status as teachers.	1.16	0.18	5 th
2.	Freedom to attach to their names, titles or prefixes as maybe determined by TRCN as identification of registered teachers in Nigeria.	1.24	0.06	1 st
3.	Freedom to impact their professional skills, knowledge and values within the education system and subject to regulation by TRCN.	1.17	0.36	4 th
4.	Freedom to participate in all TRCN activities that are open to members.	1.21	0.59	2 nd
5.	Freedom to letter of credence from TRCN when required by Foreign Teacher Councils or other relevant bodies around the world.	1.06	0.38	6 th
6.	Freedom to professional salary scales, allowances and other benefits that may be secured by TRCN for registered teachers.	1.18	0.34	3 rd

Results in table 3 indicated that out of six items that address prospective teachers' awareness of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN, items 2, 4, 6 and 3 revealed that majority of prospective teachers were not aware of some of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN as the items mean were below the average and were ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th respectively. However, the least of the items was item 5. This implies that prospective teachers were not aware of rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN for quality assurance in the education system.

Discussion

Findings of this study revealed that majority of prospective teachers were aware of some of the activities of the TRCN towards teacher certification that identified in this study. They were of induction at point of graduation, registration and licensing of qualified teachers, conduct of professional qualifying examinations and supervision of the courses and programs of teacher training institutions in Nigeria. This indicated that prospective teachers were aware of the processes and activities involved in teacher registration for teacher certification. This finding of this study is consistent with finding of Oyebade, Oladipo, & Adetoro, (2008) and Okebukola, (2005) who discovered that proper coordination of the examination and supervision of the programmes were high priority in quality assurance in teacher education for practical teaching that ensures professionalism.

In this study, finding also showed that majority of the prospective teachers were aware of the obligations of teachers registered under TRCN. They were aware that teacher should evaluate periodically the learners' performance, aspire to make a successful career within the system, render all professional assistance likely to enable learners to identify and excel in their skills and be dedicated and faithful in all professional undertakings being punctual, thorough, conscientious and dependable. This finding implies that prospective teachers would contribute positively towards the standards and quality of teaching profession as they were aware of the obligation. This finding was in line with finding of Jimoh, (2004) who reported that teaching should be restricted to those certified; giving high priority to service; and set the standards for training, examination, certification and admission into the profession.

The findings of the study also revealed that majority of the prospective teachers were not aware of some rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN. They were not aware of freedom to attach to their names, titles or prefixes as maybe determined by TRCN as identification of registered teachers in Nigeria, participate in all TRCN activities that are open to members. They were also not aware of freedom to professional salary scales, allowances and other benefits that may be secured by TRCN for registered teachers and freedom to impact their professional skills, knowledge and values within the education system and subject to regulation by TRCN. The finding indicates that more awareness and enlightenment are needed on rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN so that prospective teachers could intensify efforts on prompt registration with TRCN and certification after their graduation. This finding of the study is inconsistent with the findings of Osuafor and Okafor (2015) who discovered that the majority of the secondary schools teachers were aware of the ethical practices and benefits attached to teaching profession, although some of them were not highly committed to the practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the foregoing discussions, it could be concluded that teaching is one of the noblest professions and it takes a special person to be a great teacher. Getting teacher licensure is only the beginning of the journey. Awareness of prospective teachers on prospective teachers were aware of some of the activities of the TRCN towards teacher certification, obligations of teachers registered under TRCN and rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN is very important because they are expected to contribute positively to the standard and quality of education after their graduation. When they are aware of the teacher certification, this enables prospective teachers as stakeholders to intensify efforts on actualization of the objectives and mandates of TRCN. Based on the findings of study, the following recommendations were made:

- a. Professional Qualifying Examinations should be integrated into the curriculum content of final year students in teacher education programmes, especially Nigerian Certificate in Education and teacher education degree programmes.
- b. The obligations of teachers under TRCN should be given more priority in teaching practice assessment of teacher education programmes.
- c. Prospective teachers should be provided with more information and enlightenment about rights and privileges of registered teachers with TRCN. This serves as motivation and encouragement to the prospective teachers.

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