

TESTING TEACHER CANDIDATES: THE ROLE OF TRCN IN IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY IN NIGERIA

By

SHEU ADARAMAJA LUKMAN

Department of Educational Psychology, School of Education, Alvan Ikoku Federal
College of Education Owerri, Imo State
adaramaja4real@yahoo.com, +2348061254474

***Abstract:** Teachers are central to any consideration of schools, and a majority of education policy discussions focus directly or indirectly on the role of teachers. Teacher quality is the ability of the teacher to practice his teaching profession effectively through demonstration of exemplary knowledge and skills. Therefore, for any vocation to be legally recognized as a profession, its practices must be regulated and controlled by a body. It is against this basis that the paper focuses on the role of TRCN in improving teacher quality through testing teacher candidates. The paper critically examines the mandate of TRCN toward teacher quality in Nigeria, testing and professional licensing, as well as evaluation framework for testing teacher candidates.*

Key word: Teacher quality, licensing test, licensure, testing

Introduction

Teaching is one of the oldest professions in the world. Indeed it is the mother of all professions because practitioners in other professions are taught by the teacher. Teachers are central to any consideration of schools, and a majority of education policy discussions focus directly or indirectly on the role of teacher (Hanushek 2006). He further stated that parents, teachers, and administrators emphasize repeatedly the

fundamental role that teachers play in the determination of education quality. Therefore, a major factor associated with education quality related to teacher quality.

Teacher quality is the ability of a teacher to practice his/her teaching profession effectively through demonstration of exemplary knowledge and skills (Ogundare, 2009). Quality and effectiveness of teachers depend on many things. Salary and working conditions affect who enters teaching, as do schooling conditions (Teacher Education) and their professional development. The quality of teacher education and of professional development mostly influences teachers' knowledge and skills.

Therefore, for any vocation to be legally recognized as a profession, its practices must be regulated and controlled by a body. Professions such as law, Medicine, Engineering, and Pharmacy are regulated and controlled by their respective body. Consequently, the establishment of the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is to give the teaching profession legal recognition and empower it to guarantee qualitative practice (TRCN 2005).

The council is generally promote quality practice in registration and licensing of qualified teachers, accreditation, monitoring and supervision of the courses and programmes of teacher training institutions in Nigeria, as well as conduct of professional examinations and interviews to determine teachers suitability for registration.

However, the belief that examinations can improve the quality of the teaching force is based on an assumption that the

tests used are good measures of the competencies needed for effective teaching and that their salutary effects on training and selection of teachers are not outweighed by negative consequences for the supply.

It is against the above introduction that this paper critically examines the role of TRCN in improving teacher quality in Nigeria, testing and professional licensing and evaluation framework for testing teacher candidates

Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) and its mandate toward Teacher Quality

The teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is an agency of the Federal Ministry of Education. It was established by Decree (Now Act) 31 of 1993. Their major mandates are the regulation and control of the teaching profession at all levels of the Nigerian Education system, both in the public and private sectors. According to TRCN (2005), the council was established to bring about a rapid transformation of the teaching profession to the highest standards possible. This particularly with respect to the quality of teacher education programmes, registration and licensing, mandatory continuing professional development, professional conduct, and overall social status of teachers at all levels of education system.

The TRCN Act has far-reaching implications for teaching profession. This reality can be appreciated by the fact that the content of the TRCN Act is one and the same with the contents of the Acts that established the councils that regulates and control the professions of law, medicine, engineering pharmacy e.t.c. It is

in accordance with the TRCN legal provisions and conventions common to the professional regulatory agencies, the council is systematically implementing the following programmes and activities (TRCN 2005).

- (i) Registration and licensing qualified teachers.
- (ii) Accreditation, monitoring and supervision of the courses and programmes of teacher training institutions in Nigeria to ensure that they meet national and international minimum standards. The institutions include the colleges of Education, Faculties and institute of education in Nigerian Universities, school of Education in the polytechnics, and the National Teachers Institute.
- (iii) Organization of internship schemes for fresh Education graduates to equip them with the necessary professional skills before licensing them for full professional practices.
- (iv) Conduct of professional examinations and interviews to determine teachers suitable for registration e.t.c.

This clearly shows that the existing practice of registering teachers upon presentation of the certificate alone cannot demonstrate teachers' knowledge and skills. Therefore, professional test should be making available to potential candidates who intend to take teaching as a profession to see his/her quality and effectiveness.

Testing and Professional Licensing

Testing according to Obimba (2009) is the process of administering test to a candidate in order to obtain a quantitative representation of the cognitive or non-cognitive traits that he

possesses. She referred traits as intellectual and psychological attribute of an individual. In other word, professional licensing according to Karen, David, Barbara and Kaeli (2001) is a gateway to the profession, allowing only those who have met minimum standards of competence to practice for some profession, certificate is granted to those who demonstrate exemplary knowledge and skill. For example, in medical profession, certification generally is professional recognition of higher standards of accomplishment and typically is associated with advanced study and practice.

Test often play an important role in licensure systems and in what candidates study and learn to prepare for licensure and practice (Darling- Hammond et al, 1999). According to American Educational Research Association et al, (1999) licensing tests are designed to provide the public with a dependable mechanism for identifying practitioners who have met particular standards. Therefore, the test specifications for professional examinations make explicit at least part of what professions considers worth knowing and how it should be known and demonstrated.

Karen et al (2001) viewed teaching professional examination as a means for ensuring that advances in professional knowledge are incorporated into professional teaching education programmes. Consequently, one way to ensure that new research knowledge gets used is by including it in professional examinations. National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (2000) also sees professional licensing test as the over all quality control system that most professions have developed.

Evaluation Framework for Testing Teacher Candidates

Test formats vary from multiple-choice questions to open-ended question to performance assessment. There are several hundred teacher licensure test currently in use. They vary from basic skills test in reading, writing and mathematics to test subject matter knowledge, general knowledge and knowledge of teaching strategies. Test in other professional fields are designed to identify candidates with the knowledge and skills that expert believe are minimally necessary. The following are the evaluation framework for testing teacher candidates.

Step 1: Decide the purpose of the test, in produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system. It shows the essence of testing through gathering reliable, valid and useful information about teacher candidates' knowledge and skill. It shows clear definition of the occupation, nature and the requirement of the job.

Step II: Determine the content areas to be covered and the instructional objectives which were covered. These are the knowledge, skills, abilities and dispositions needed to produce teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.

Step III: Prepare table of specification. This relates the content with the behavioural objective of the candidates. It determines whether the knowledge and skills examined by

the test are relevant to the job; and are represented in the test specification.

Step IV: Write out the test items according to the table of specifications. According to Impara (1995) these items are generally obtained by having subject matter experts' rate items on how well they reflect the test specifications, testing objectives, and responsibilities of the job.

Step V: Review the test to ascertain if it actually measure the expected behavioural and the coverage of representative sample of the knowledge, skills, abilities and depositions needed to perform the tasks. According Sireci and Green (2000), sensitivity reviews are determine in preparation of test to show if irrelevant characteristics of test questions or test forms are likely to produce unfair advantages or disadvantages to particular group of test taker.

Step VI: Preparation of test rubrics, item tryout and item analysis. According to Onuka (2009) the pool of test items has to be trial tested a sample of candidates similar the actual testees. This exercise enables the test designer to verify the adequacy of the rubrics, time allowed, and format of the test. Next, score and thereafter analyze each item to obtain the difficulty and discrimination indices and find out the effectiveness of the distractors.

Step VII: Arrangement of the test items on the basis of their level of difficulty.

Step VIII: Test administration and scoring – Appropriate administration conditions, scoring processes, quality control procedures, confidentiality requirements, and

procedures for handling assessment materials should be used. If possible, clear policies on retaking the examination and on the appeals process should be communicated to candidates.

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

Despite the fact that test play an important role in licensure systems and in what candidates study and learn to prepare for licensure and practice, teacher candidates must fulfill education requirements, successfully complete practice teaching, and receive the recommendations of their preparing institutions. These requirements help ensure that a broad range of competencies are considered in licensing new teachers.

However, government, test developers and professional organizations should continue exploring joint development of improving initial teacher licensing system. It is also important that, test should be made available to potential candidates whom intend to take teaching as a profession to see their quality and effectiveness.

More so, the developers and reviewers of this test should be representative, diverse and trained in their task. Uniform assessment conditions should be provided for candidates to test under standard conditions. Appropriate scoring models for individual exercises and the total assessment should be clearly described and appropriately implemented.

In addition, confidentiality and security of candidate performances should be protected, and clear policy on retaking

the assessment should be stated for candidates who do not pass the test.

Lastly, this test should be extends to old teachers once in a while to see their effectiveness.

References

American Educational Research association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on measurement in Education. (1999); *Standards for educational & Psychological testing*. Washington, DC; American Educational Research Association.

Dialing-Hammond, L., Wise, A.E, and Klein, S. P (1999). *A license to teach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Eric A. Hanushek (2006) *Teacher Quality: Dallas National Bureau of Economic Research & University of Texas at Dallas Volume 2*.

Impara, J. (1995). *Licensure testing: Purposes, procedures and practices*. Lincoln, NE: Buros Institute of mental measurement.

Karen J. Matchell, David, Z.R, Barbara, S. P. & Kaoli, T.K. (2001) *Testing Teacher candidates: The Role of licensure Test in improving Teacher Quality*. Washington, D C: National Academy Press.

National Association of state Directors of Teacher Education & Certification (2000 b). *The NASDTEC manual on the preparation and Certification of Educational Personnel 5th ed*. T. Andrews, and L. Andrews (Eds). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Obimba, F. U (2009). *Fundamental of Educational measurement and Evaluation: 3rd Ed*; Owerri; Design prints enterprises.

Ogundare, S. F. (2009); Teacher Education and the challenges of Global Economic meltdown, *lead paper presented at the second National Conference of Emmanuel Alayamde college of Education, Oyo, July, 2009. P. S.*

Onuka, A. (2009) Developing Objective Tests. *Workshop papers on multiple choice test item writing procedures for university of Ilorin Academic Staff Ilorin: Unilorin press.*

Sireci, S.G & Green, P.C (2000). *Legal and Psychometric criteria for evaluating teacher Certification tests. Educational measurement: Issues and Practice, 199, 22-31.*

Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (2005). *Teachers Handbook, Revised Edition; Abuja, MAKJIF NIG. Enterprises.*