

TEACHER EDUCATION AS A VITAL TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

The teacher is an indispensable tool for national development. It is in realization of this fact that teacher education occupies a position of prominence in the educational enterprise. But to achieve worthwhile education, teacher preparation programme must be provided with all sincerity and the best brains in the land must be attracted to occupy their position in the teaching profession. In the light of the above, this paper discussed the concept of teacher education and national development. Also, a number of challenges such as lowering admission requirement, the quality of teacher education programme, issues in funding teachers' education and more, confronting teacher education were examined. The paper concludes by drawing attention to the importance of teacher education for the development of a nation and relevant recommendations such as control of entry into the teaching profession, appropriate budgetary allocation to education sectors and accountability among others were proffered to reposition teacher education and teaching profession.

Keywords: *Teacher, Education, Teacher Education, National Development.*

Introduction

Teacher education refers to professional education of teacher towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their live and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education raises people productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances.

There is no doubt that education is generally regarded as a means to better life and the upliftment of the society at large. Hence, it is seen as a potent instrument for social economic and political transformation of the nation. This development has thrust a lot of responsibilities on teachers who are major operators of any education system. It is not an overstatement that the professionalization of teaching and making the teacher the centers of education reform in Nigeria, will enhance teachers productivity, reduce the systemic problems in the education sector, ensure effective service delivery, engage other sectors of society as well as place education as instrument par excellence for national development (Okemakinde, Adewuyi & Alabi 2013).

Essentially teachers have obligation to the development of education and teaching as a profession and these noble objectives can be realized by the training and retraining of teachers through in-service education (Eduwen, 2016). In recent past, Nigeria has witnessed tremendous expansion in the teachers education programmes it is expected that a well-designed teacher education programme should strive to achieve the set objectives of societal demands and expectations. Teacher education is even evolving and dynamic and it is imperative for the government at all levels to ensure adequate preparation of competent teachers to face these challenges in a fast changing society like Nigeria. The heartbeat of manpower development and training for prudent use and sustenance of resources in nation building is teacher education.

Conceptualizing Teachers Education

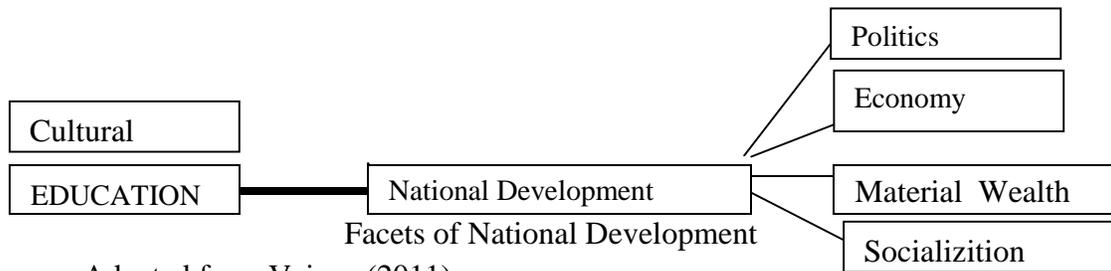
Teachers education is an organized institution designed for the professional training of those who engaged in the art and science of teaching. Oyekan (2006) opined that teacher education is the professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills work, in accordance with the need of the society at any point in time. It includes training /education of service (pre-service) and education / training during service (in-service or on the job). Also, teacher education can be defined as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they required to perform the tasks effectively in the class room and the wider society.

According to Imogie (1992), teacher education is therefore a formal programme designed to produce academically qualified and component corps of personnel who will continue the process of transmitting worthwhile knowledge to the present generation through the different levels of the school system. This is apt articulated by the federal republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy of Education when the goals of teacher education were stated as follows.

- (i) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- (ii) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry creativity in teachers.
- (iii) To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment of national goals.
- (iv) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world and
- (v) To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The Concept of National Development

National development is very comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It's a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation and development of individuals. It can best be defined as the all-around and balanced development of different aspects and facets of the nation viz. political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material.



Source: Adapted from Vaizey (2011)

National development is the total effect of all citizen forces and addition to the stock of physical, human resources, knowledge and skill.

According to Egwu (2007) as cited by Adeyera (2011), national development is the establishment of a viable and buoyant national economy, the establishment of a just and egalitarian society, the enthronement of quality and social justice and the building of a unified and integrated society where the different ethics, religious and geo-political identities develop a collective sense of imagination that they are one. In the same vein, national development, in the word of Emeh and Ogaboh (2010) in Okemkinde, Adewuyi and Alabi (2013) involves the total transformation of society, making humanity the focus of the development drive and seeking to develop man's potentialities in a total sense. It concludes reduction of poverty, wealth creation, equitable distribution of wealth, ensuring nutrition and health, housing and auxiliary services, social security and welfare. This presupposes that national development is an all-embracing entity on the part of individual and societal change with such indications as quality food, gainful employment and wealth creation, power reduction within the ambit of such framework as equality, dignity, social justice and equity.

Hence, a nation cannot be said to have development when a significant percent of her population are not literate and there is decay in the country's educational system. National development must therefore route for change in all areas of culture which include the economy, technology and environmental in such a way that the physical and mental abilities of the citizenry are best positioned to achieve beneficial change (Ani, Onyia and Iketaku, 2013).

Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria over the years has witnessed teachers' tremendous challenges resulting from socio-economic, political and technological advancements. It is against this background that the challenges affecting teacher education can be thoroughly examined.

Lowering of Admission Requirement: The criteria for the admission of students into teacher training programmes have been a matter of controversy all over the country. It is the contention in many quarters that it is less competent students who choose teaching as a career. It has also been said that it is only by a process of elimination that the students select teachers' education as a form of higher education he or she will pursue.

Most students/candidates would opt for programmes in Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, Engineering and so on, would only come into Education on rejection in their preferred courses. This is because the cut-off mark for Education courses is much lower. This creates

a disparity at the point of admission between Education students and all other students, who look down on Education Students, as they see them as intellectually inferior. This is in addition to the fact that teachers do not seem to have commanded as much respect in society as members of the other professions. The way to ensure quality control and professionalism is to evaluate and assess the individual qualities or intake characteristics of students as well as to focus the programmes on the abilities of students which are valued by those who eventually employ these teachers.

The Quality of Teacher Education Programme: In Nigeria today, the quality of teacher's education is very much in doubt. Teacher education have not been innovative in relation to instructional methods. Obsolete textbooks or plagiarized books and teaching methods are still very much in vogue. The curriculum practices are theory oriented rather than actual practice in the world of work. In addition, the quality of the programmes is also largely determined by those who teach the teachers. It is a matter of regret and lamentation that most teacher educators cannot be described as professional teachers these days since many possess degree such as B.A (Hons) B.Sc (Hons) etc in single subject discipline without educational background. The implication of this for teachers' education is decline in academic standard.

Quality assurance can be described as planned and systematic programme designed to ensure teacher's quality is maintained or improved. In Nigeria, teacher education has no well-defined system of assessing its quality and evaluating its outcomes. Teacher's quality is an inherent problem which forms a vicious circle. The inputs are weak, taught by teachers who largely were weak on admission, so their output will of necessity largely be of low quality (Musa, 2019). On a general note, prospective to teaching candidates would ordinarily not want to come into a profession that is perceived to be made up of people who are weak intellectually.

Issues in Funding of Teachers Education in Nigeria: The funding of teacher education in Nigeria has been very irregular and never been adequate for the procurement and maintenance of equipment for teaching and learning. The crises created by the gross under funding of teacher education include under achievement by the products of the system, widespread corruption, indiscipline and under-utilization of capacities in all facets of our national life and development. The end result is that standards are openly being compromised. Total neglect of the infrastructural facilities has led to some loss of confidence in the entire education system by the general public (Musa, 2019). Yet the amount of funding that schools actually receive from government is invariably less than the 26% recommended of the annual budgetary allocation to educational sector by UNESCO (See Table 2).

Table 2: Budgetary Allocation to Education in Nigeria Expressed in Percentages from 2005-2019

Year	Allocation as % of total Budget
2005	8.21
2006	10.43
2007	9.75
2008	10.04
2009	8.79
2010	7.37
2011	9.32
2012	9.86
2013	10.21
2014	10.68
2015	8.91
2016	6.10
2017	7.38
2018	7.04
2019	7.02

Source: Ogonor (2019) Central Bank of Nigeria 2019 Statistical Bulletin and Information. With the paltry budgetary allocation to the educational sector by government over the years, it is doubtful if the interest of teachers under preparation and in service can ever be provided for adequately. Yet if everything about teaching and teachers is treated with levity by government, how can prospective students be interested to study education at different levels of education. Kolo (2013) posits that destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or the use of long range missiles, it only requires lowering the quality of education and producing examination cheats graduating with high grades.

The quality of life of any nation cannot be expected to be more than the quality of the education of her citizenry and the intentional investment in education system. A quick look at the world today shows that all developed countries have massive and strong education institutions while the under developed countries are bedeviled with perennial lack of the appreciation for the need to take education serious.

Insufficient Human Resources: The shortage of qualified teachers is not restricted to Nigeria. The shortage of teachers at basic education level is a result of the dwindling number of enrolment into the train-the-teacher programme. Also, there is lack of personnel at the teachers education institutions to prosecute the train-the –teacher programmes because of among other factors the brain drain phenomenon, (ie drift of many brilliant, intelligent and more experienced lecturers to outside Nigeria and within, especially to the university where they will be offered better remunerations and conditions of service. This syndrome is, to a large extent, attributable to inadequate incentives , poorly equipped education system in an increasingly hostile working environments, inadequate social recognition, delay in payment (and sometimes denial) of teachers, salaries, among others. Brain drain, which is also said to be a global phenomenon, as the UNESCO estimates that 2.6million teachers leaving the profession annually in sub-Saharan Africa, has taken a huge

toll on education. The brilliant, intelligent and more experienced professionals, who are mostly holders of Ph.D Degrees, leave Nigeria for greener pasture. And with retirements of brain drains (Lecturers) from the service. The teachers education programmes will then be left with training the less qualified, some of which are university (the choice department) rejects, especially in the Colleges of Education and other teachers training institutions. These students, wangled their way out (most through fraudulent ways) and are later employed to teach. The teacher education especially at the Colleges of Education level is almost a case of garbage-in, garbage-out process. Although there are exceptional that are real good.

Professionalization of Teaching: The need for the professionalization of teaching has become imperative in view of the advent of new technology and knowledge explosion that demand better trained teachers of the various levels of our educational sector. Essentially, professionalism should be seen as the ability of the practitioners of an occupation to enforce its rules and regulations in terms of the autonomy and prestige, ethics, work conditions, admission into the field, training, certification and registration. Unfortunately, teaching in Nigeria is yet to be fully accorded the full recognition as a profession because it has no direct and systematic control status, poor remuneration of teachers and lack of political will on the part of teachers' registration council to enforce its code of ethics and standard.

Insufficient knowledge and use of information Communication Technology (ICT): A further challenge to teacher education in Nigeria is that of insufficient knowledge and use of ICT in a globalizing world. The knowledge and use of computer technology as well as the internet is a necessity for all teachers to guarantee the relevance of the system and its products in the 21st Century. Many schools in Nigeria still operate the traditional education system with little or no adaptation to ICT. To benefit from the ubiquity of information and to facilitate communication among professional networks, school teachers need, not only be trained and re-trained in ICTs but facilities must be provided and powered (electricity) by government to enable teachers and their students access to these remain uninterrupted, more so that the world is becoming a global village. For our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times (Osokaya, 2012).

Poor Remuneration and Poor Conditions of Service for Teachers: When one realizes that it is the teacher who produces all the other professional, including oil workers and members of the national and State Assemblies, one is at loss to consider teaching as a career. Apart from the pay being terribly poor, the environment in which the teacher does his job is so demeaning: overcrowded classrooms with students sometimes outside the classroom by the windows or sitting on the bare floor in ill ventilated classrooms within dilapidated structure, lack of equipment, facilities and instructional materials conducive for effective teaching and learning (Kpanghan, 2019).

As a result of the poor remuneration and the poor motivation of teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria, teachers often engage in other businesses to survive. But this tends to reduce the self-esteem of teachers and reduce their societal regard (or status) for them.

This is probably why Jones (2013) posits that “other members of the society regard the teaching profession with contempt, feeling that it is a refuse camp for mediocre, people with average drive for power average ambition and escapism and people who are industrious but unimaginative and uncreative”.

Education and National Development

Ukeje, 1988 in Nwokocha (2013), pointed that education unlocks the door to modernization and sustainable development but that, it is the teacher that holds the key to the door. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programmes into action. It is clear from the foregoing that the role of the teacher in sustainable development cannot be quantified, especially in training personnel in various areas of workforce. For national development and peaceful co-existence to be attend there is need to give priority to investment in human resource needed in the society and economic sector. Herein comes the role of effective education programme to translate the needed skills knowledge and attitudes to meet their needs and the societal ones.

The Role of Teacher Education in National Development

Teacher education is an indispensable key to national development. Okemakinde, Adewuyi and Alabi (2013) asserted that for national development to be attained, there is need to give priority to investment in human capital through teacher education. If people are educated in the real sense of it, they would not wait for government to provide them with job; they will engage themselves in the development of their milieu by liberating themselves from the grip of poverty and unemployment. As a matter of fact, the vital institutional mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge is the formal education system via teacher education.

The service of a teacher towards modernization of sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. It is before clear that no professional and adequate training of manpower for the education sector can be successful without competent teachers to handle the training programme. Hence teacher education deserves the highest priority in the training and education of teachers. No wonder it has been asserted that teachers are the essential elements recognized by the society to be in charge of the art and science of training manpower for the teaching profession.

According to Okolo (2013) education is the mainstay of human capital development. No doubts, no national transformation can take place without an obvious human capital agenda. And obviously, human capital development is a function of education at all levels. Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee (2016) opined that education itself can only be human capital development oriented if it is functional, qualitative and knowledge, economy driven, a delivery that can only be done by teachers produced from a dynamic and innovative teacher education system. These scholars asserted further that of all instruments or approaches to national development and transformation, functional and

quality education remains the most potent tool, but the system used must be subjected to reforms and repositioning as static education systems do not transform societies. Herein, education can only be reworked and utilized for national development if teacher education is equally re-planned and up-scaled to serve the purpose. The mistake often made is to see interventions like TETFund and ETF in education sectors as directly capable of enhancing quality and functionality without the equally required competent teachers to drive the inputs process for desired outcomes and outputs. The supply of qualified teachers is the bottle-neck of improvement.

Conclusion

Teachers' education in Nigeria has been subjected to severe challenges affecting sustainable national development with the result that the very laudable goals of education have been very difficult to attain. Teachers play a vital role in developing the education potentials of any nation. Therefore, educating the teacher for effective performance of his responsibility of educating the members of a larger society becomes imperative.

In spite of numerous progress made in developing teacher education in Nigeria, the sector is still confronted with myriads of challenges. Therefore, it is recommended that if the suggestions spelt out in this paper are carried out, there will be improvement in teacher education programmes in Nigeria as well sustainable national development.

Recommendations

To revamp teacher education to meet up its obligations as nation builders, the following strategies have been suggested:

- (i) Control of entry into the teaching profession;
- (ii) Admission of best brains into teachers education programme;
- (iii) Appropriate budgetary allocation to education sectors and accountability;
- (iv) Government need to be more committed to the welfare of teachers through improved conditions of service for teachers making teachers the highest paid profession in the land to attract the best brains into teacher programmes;
- (v) Automatic employment of qualified teachers on graduation
- (vi) There is need to re-organize the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) is presently constituted to be more proactive in enforcing the code of ethics and standard of the teaching profession.
- (vii) Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To this ends government should train and retain teachers on the use of ICT and also, ICT facilities should be provided in schools for easy access, and adequate qualified manpower to man these facilities.

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