

Repositioning Teacher Education in Nigeria for Sustainable National Development

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Abstract

This paper examines teacher education in Nigeria as a catalyst for sustainable national development as a result of its position as the trainer of manpower who in turn utilize the human and material resources for the transformation and development of Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the need for repositioning teacher education in Nigeria for sustainable national development in the area of general strengths, weaknesses and the need for quality performance that would invariably give birth to quality performance of the present and next generation unborn. The study would be significant in that it would serve as a direction to the Nigerian Educational Planners, stakeholders of Education, provost of colleges of education, National Teachers Institute, and faculties of Education in universities. It will also be beneficial to Federal Government in that it will show how to uplift teacher education in order to entice more people into the teaching profession and correct the mind-set of would-be professional teachers about teaching profession. Based on the stated facts, the paper examines the performance of teacher education. It highlights the need for quality performance in teacher education and gives some recommendations to address the lapses of teacher education. Candidates for admission rejected by other disciplines as a result of low grades and absorbed by the Faculty of Education should be stopped. Professionals and qualified teachers should be made to take charge of Education Ministries and other related educational commissions. It should not be politicized. There should be constant monitoring and supervision of student teacher trainees by experienced and qualified teachers in line with the National Universities Commission benchmark of twelve weeks.

Keywords: repositioning, teacher education in Nigeria, sustainable national development

INTRODUCTION

The importance of teacher education is recognized worldwide in that it is through teacher education that teachers are trained and they also train the born and unborn generation who will manage the affairs of a nation such as Nigeria. According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2008), education is an “instrument par excellence” for effecting national development. Teacher education is the process of preparing, training and educating a prospective teacher for his/her role performance in the classroom and the school settings. It is a specialized area of education with policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform in the classroom, school and the wider society (Esu, 1995).

Nnachi (2008) observed that the teacher is the brain-box of educational activities and his position and activities are quite inevitable in championing the educational affairs. That is why continuous education for teachers cannot be toyed with, if teacher education is toyed with, it goes to show that there will be nobody who would be trained to harness the human and material resources for the transformation and development of Nigeria. Thus teacher education

is so important that those concerned about the training of teachers should have a second thought to make teacher education enticing so that those who thought that teacher education was a second-hand training would embrace it. The way teacher education is being handled now, people who have a negative thought about teacher education would take teacher education as a stepping stone for future educational advancement. The way teacher education has been criticized is such that there is need for one to find out why such criticism should be. One of the arguments is that the teachers who are in the school system have some deficiencies; hence, the question is whether they were trained at all.

In Nigeria, there are categories of institutions that train teachers. The institutions are Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, Universities Faculty of Education, National Teachers' Institute, and Schools of Education in the Polytechnics. Anyone who had his/her teacher education through any of these institutions is classified as a qualified teacher by definition but looking at the background of such people and the credentials they present to enable them have admission to undergo teacher education, sometimes looks questionable.

The education of teachers from these institutions is done by two basic models of teacher education. They are: the *Consecutive Model* which states that a teacher first obtains a qualification in one or more subjects and then studies for a three or four years period for the first degree depending on the entry qualification. In the process, the teachers are educated for the nation.

The Concurrent Model. In this model, the student teacher simultaneously studies one or more academic subjects with various methods of teaching and professional courses leading to the award of Bachelor in Education. This is also educating teachers for the nation.

Universities which are called citadel of knowledge, teacher education has lost its credibility in that teaching practice which is part of teacher education which should last for about twelve weeks sometimes last for just some weeks which falls short of the stipulated twelve weeks. Such would-be teachers have been found half-baked in that they could not express themselves during the teaching practice. This shows that some of them could not receive the type of training a teacher should receive. This is a setback of teacher education indeed.

Nnachi (2008) sees a teacher as an educator in that he is the one who imparts new knowledge to learners as well as skills so as to change and improve the life patterns of other people. Nnachi (2006) also sees a teacher as a distributor of knowledge, counsellor, an instrument of change and a life moulder as a result his education should be paramount in all ramifications of teacher education, if not, his presence would bring about what is called "theory of vicious cycle" in that the knowledge that would be imparted would not be acceptable in this contemporary times and also have impact on the teachers. Consequently, those who would be trained by such teachers would not be able to perform creditably as a result of what they received from the half-baked teachers.

The national goals for teacher education constitute the standards by which the programme can be judged (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2008). In a situation that the programme runs short of the goals, it is considered inadequate in quality. Quality performance in teacher education can be measured from the extent of the adequacy of the national teacher education programme. In other words, can we say that the programme has been good enough to meet up national goals and aspirations as enshrined in the Federal Republic of Nigeria Policy on Education (2008). In measuring the quality of teacher education, there is then the consideration of;

- ❖ The products of the endeavour,
- ❖ The efficiency of the product,

- ❖ The general qualities of the products of the endeavour (Nnachi, 2008)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of the study was to ascertain the need for repositioning teacher education in Nigeria for sustainable national development in the area of general strengths, weakness and the need for quality performance that would invariably give birth to quality performance of the present and the next generation unborn.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A study of this nature may have a setback in teacher education in Nigeria if its significance is not amplified as a result of its position and contributions to the growth and development of Nigeria as a result of its position as trainer of manpower in the nation building. It would serve as a direction to the Nigerian educational planners, stakeholders of education, supervisors of education, the Provost of Colleges of Education, the Coordinators of the National Teachers' Institute, the Vice Chancellors of the Universities, the Rectors of Polytechnics, Heads of Department of Faculty of Education who are incidentally directly in charge of teacher education. This study would benefit the Federal Government of Nigeria in that it would help her thinking of how to uplift teacher education in order to entice more people into the teaching profession. People who will like to take teacher education to enable them become professional teachers would undertake the training with all zealously and seriousness to become real professional teachers who would compete favourably with other people in other professions.

It would make the would-be professional teachers correct their mind set about teaching profession.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Quality performance has been a matter of concern in the production of teachers on completion of their teacher education, they will be able to teach the learners at their disposal with ease. If a teacher, after teacher education, cannot impart knowledge on the learners, it would have been better not to call him/her in that learners would be at the mercy of God for the reason that they will not be able to come out as successful learners who can contribute to the growth and development of Nigeria. Consequently, the teacher education would have failed to reposition a sustainable growth and development of Nigeria.

Teaching is a process of imparting knowledge and skills to learners in order to achieve predetermined objectives. In the process, learning takes place resulting in a relative permanent change in students' behaviours. Such a change may be a cognitive aspect (ability to think and reason), in the affective aspect (attitudes, values/interest) and the psychomotor

aspect (skills). Teaching is also viewed as a process of getting a learner to become really educated. Quality in its domain refers to the standard of something inconsideration of other things in similar nature. Ciwer (2005) said that international community defines quality performance in reference to education, as the setting of standards for the various processes and activities that lead to the production of teachers by the training institution.

The national growth for teachers education constitute the standards by which the programme can be judged. In a situation where programmes run short of the goals, they are considered inadequate in quality. Can we say that teacher education has been good enough to meet up national aspirations as enshrined in the national policy on education, considering the various processes and activities that lead to the production of teachers. This needs to be rationally assessed and verdict given so that proper things could be done for a better teacher education in Nigeria. This is the reason why the researcher decided to undertake this study.

SOME OF THE SHORTFALLS OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Requirements for entry into teacher Education programmes. This is a serious matter especially those who undergo teacher education programme with National Teachers' Institute. The course contents are of high standard but the entry requirements make fun of the programme in that some of the students, one way or the other gained admission to do the programme without the basic requirements such as West African School Certificate or NECO. Basically, the requirements were not satisfactory enough to be given admission. That programme was contact period with the tutors/lectures about four times in a month only on Saturdays which is not enough. Since the educational background of some of them is porous, such will continue ignorantly and the programme comes to an end. What have they studied to contribute to the growth of national development and sustain it? This is a real setback.

By implication, the teacher to be should be an intellectual model. He should be a living example and a model for intellectual matters and the one that should take others along. The question that needs to be answered is whether the Nigerian teacher possesses the attributes? Being an imparter of knowledge, the teacher to be should be seen as the epitome of intellectualism. Okebukola (2005) pointed out that the apathy toward selecting teaching as a profession result from the shortage of genuinely interested candidates into education faculties. Based on that, Okebukola (2005) revealed that faculties of education offer admission to candidates with weak passes in Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) or National

Examination Council Certificate (NECO) that have lost opportunities of admission in other faculties. This does not augur well for teacher education in that it makes teacher education look so inferior to other disciplines. Again, faculties of education are populated by holders of the Nigerian Certificate of Education with less than five credits level passes at the Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) with the result that teachers in the Nigerian school systems are drawn from the faculties (Okebukola, 2005).

If the situation as highlighted continues, how can one be sure that teacher education is producing teachers who can stand the test of time than to reposition teacher education for sustainable development in Nigeria?

Okebukola (2005) highlights that as a means of the review of Minimum Academic Standard (MAS) of the Nigerian Universities system, rapid needs assessment survey was conducted to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the training programmes for education students. The study revealed the following findings below:

General Strength

The findings indicated that over 80% of the persons surveyed in the questionnaire took the position that graduates of education in the last tenyears had no strength. The respondents, however, indicated some positive characteristics of the graduate teachers; such positive characteristics included willingness to learn, punctuality to school and ability to discipline students. The percentages of the subjects selected in these areas of strength were asfollows:

Table 1: Perception of strength of education graduates

S/N	AREAS OF STRENGTH	%
1	Willingness to learn	11.6
2	Punctuality to school	5.4
3	Ability to discipline	8.8
4	No visible strength	74.2

R. O. Nnachi (2005) Need for quality assurance in teacher education in Nigeria. Source: Adapted from I. Okebukola (2005). Quality assurance in teacher education. The role of Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities. A publication of Deans of Education in Nigerian Universities.

Table one indicates that 11.6% of the people surveyed agreed that education graduates were willing to learn. 5.4% agreed that the graduates were punctual to school, 8.8% agreed that the graduates had ability to discipline whereas 74% agreed that education graduate had no visible general weakness

The participants in the study indicated a number of weaknesses exhibited by the education graduate

including the following;

- ❖ Lack of self-reliant and entrepreneurial skills.
- ❖ Poor attitude to work

The survey revealed a great deal of weaknesses among education graduates and went forward to assess the skills acquired by the graduates in different dimensions of life.

Table 2: Overall Assessment of Skills Acquired by Education Graduates

Skills	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Literary skills	0%	22.2%	66.7%	11.1%	0%
Oral communication	0%	44.4%	33.3%	22.2%	0%
Information tech skills	0%	11.1%	55.6%	33.3%	0%
Entrepreneurial skills	0%	0%	88.9%	11.1%	0%
Analytical skills	0%	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%	0%
Problem solving	0%	33.3%	44.4%	11.1%	0%
Subject specific knowledge	11.1%	22.2%	66.7%	0%	0%
Technical skills	0%	1.1%	77.8%	11.1%	0%
Critical thinking skills	0%	2.2%	66.7%	11.1%	0%
Self-directed learning	0%	11.1%	88.9%	0%	0%
Interpersonal skills	0%	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0%
Numeracy	0%	44.4%	55.6%	0%	0%

Source: Adapted from R.O. Nnachi (2008). Need for quality assurance inteacher education in Nigeria in P. Okebukola (2005). Quality assurance in teacher education. The role of Faculties of Education in Nigerian Universities. A publication of Deans of Education in Nigerian Universities.

Table 2 indicates that education graduates fall within the range between good and poor. Apart from subject of specific knowledge, no other skill has any score under "very good". The table shows that there are many areas that require drastic improvement. The survey research carried out to ascertain the strengths and weaknesses of the training programmes for education students also revealed that teachers lack competence in handling certain topics in some subject areas such as Biology, Chemistry, English language, Physics and so on (Okebukola, 2005). This shows that, there is the indication that teacher education still needs some of improvement. This means that, if nothing drastic takes place, the repositioning of teacher education in Nigeria for sustainable development would be eluded.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT ACCEPTABLE PERFORMANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

For teacher education to live up to expectation, that is to be able to contribute to the sustainable national development, the following factors should be adhered to and necessary actions and strategies taken to ensure that teacher education performs its legitimate responsibilities as enshrined in Federal Government National Policy on Education (2008). If that is adhered to, it will be a way forward for achieving sustainable national development.

The policy outlined the goals of teacher education as follows:

- a. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- b. Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- c. Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and

- d. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
- e. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (p.39).

The factors include the following:

- ❖ Population explosion of teachers in training
- ❖ Class size
- ❖ Low moral for teaching job.
- ❖ Duration of training
- ❖ Discipline
- ❖ professionalization

Population Explosion of Teachers in Training

This is one of the most threatening factors that affects teacher education. Even after teacher education and when they might have been posted to schools, Manga (2002) identified the indicated factor as a serious one, in that the school population is already straining existing facilities like lecture room facilities where students stand to receive lectures which is not ideal. Additionally, such large classes have negative effect on lecturing and learning. The lecturers have no loud speaker to enable them audibly pass instructions to the students as a result of the large class not to talk about student/lecturer ratio. Now that there is Information Communication Technology (ICT), most of the lecturers are not acquainted with the use of overhead projectors to have helped to pass the information to the students easier because they will see and hear at the same time to make lecturing and learning comprehensible. Population explosion has been one of the causes of crash programmes for the production of non-performing teachers. A few of the

programmes are sandwich and pivotal teachers education programme.

The 2012/2013 sandwich teachers' education programme which took place at the University of Calabar International Secondary School was a typical example. The student/lecturer ratio was too large that some students could not even hear what the lecturer was imparting to them. During the lecturing hour, the students outside could do nothing than to doze or communicate outside without knowing what was going on in the class. At the end of this the students would be asked to write an examination. Is it not examination malpractice that would help them to pass their examination? Okebukola (2005) observed that the class size makes monitoring of teacher trainees difficult and such hinders the progress of teacher education.

Duration of Training and Teacher Professionalism

Duration of the training is short in comparison to other status of professionalism. Enough time is not given to the practical aspect of training in teacher education. In some cases, a period of weeks is used for teaching practice, making a mockery of the professional teacher. Teaching practice is a socialisation process of inducting student teachers into the belief, norms, value, and ethics of the teaching profession. According to Nnachi (2005), when questions pertaining to practical experiences, internship and professional examination programmes are asked, the trainees find it difficult to answer. In other professional bodies such as Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN), the participants have to pass their professional examinations before becoming members or accountants (professionals). It is not so with teaching. Anybody who leaves College of Education, University, Institute of Education, National Teachers Institute or at times those who finished their senior secondary school and even with a weak pass, if he/she so wishes can become a teacher. What do we expect from such so called Mteachers?

Problem of Professionalization

The approaches taken for the professionalization of teaching jobs create the problem for the teacher and teacher trainees. In the case of professionalization, teachers are not put under one umbrella. For instance, there are differences in the categorization of teachers and the amounts for their registration. This is a way of creating discrimination for the teachers that are supposed to be under one umbrella. The categorization and differences in registration fees is indicated by the Teachers Registration Hand book (2002) is shown below:

From the below table there is no uniformity in the procedure of professionalization for all teachers. This also affects the teacher trainees who see other

categories of trainees as different from them. It affects teachers' quality and production.

Table 3: Categorization of Teachers by qualification and registration fees

Category	Qualification	Registration fees
A	Ph.D in Edu. Ph.D in Plus Edu.	N10,000
B	Master in Education Master Plus Edu.	N8,000
C	1st Degree 1st Degree plus Edu.	N6,000
D	N.C.E or its Equivalent Trs. Gd. I Trs. Gd. II	N3,000

Source: Teachers' Handbook Registration Council (2005). Yaba-Lagos, NERDC Press.

Also from the table, there are other categories of teachers such as senior secondary school learners who are teaching but they are not found in any of the discussed categories. Where do we classify them? If such category of the so called teachers is found in our schools, can we say that we are repositioning teacher education for sustainable national development?

THE NEED FOR QUALITY PERFORMANCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Education is the greatest key to the development and enhancement of human resource through which the human personality is elevated. Not only the human personality but also a key that opens the door of a nation's growth, development and transformation. Consequently, if the type of education transmitted to the citizenry is not the type, then such education should not waste its time to exist. That is why teacher education is very important so that the objectives of the nation building will be achieved.

Nnachi (2006) hinted that if there is assurance of quality in teacher education, there will be certainty for social development and human civilisation. Quality performance in teacher education will, no doubt, lead to the realization of the goals for which teacher education is the key factor. It is only when the goals of nation building are realized that teacher education in Nigeria, according to Federal Government Policy on Education (FRN,-2008) could be achieved.

Going through the goals therefore, one should expect that a qualitative produced teacher should be the one who will be.

- ❖ Conscientious, effective and efficient to handle classroom challenges.
- ❖ Knowledgeable enough to have spirit of enquiry and creativity in solving classroom challenges and social problems and
- ❖ Professionally oriented in the ethics and management of academic activities.

In the course of teacher training, the above should be inculcated in the teachers in training. Consequently, it is obvious that the challenges of the goals of teacher education as well as the goals of education in Nigeria as well as the other parts of this world be reduced and consequently, the nation's growth and development would be achieved. By so doing, there will be peace and tranquility in the nation.

It is therefore hopeful that if the teacher in training is carefully selected, trained and equipped, the products would perform qualitatively, likewise their products (Okebekola, 2005). Nnachi (2006) noticed that haphazard training of teachers have some implications on those who pass through them.

TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS FROM THE NATION

Teachers are those who are professionally qualified and trained/ educated to provide schooling for learners (pupils and students). They facilitate education and also provide instruction in school subjects. Teachers are those the nation use to educate and train tomorrow's leaders. Therefore, the teachers expect good treatment in terms of remuneration, incentives and conducive/enabling environment. They also expect a good salary to motivate them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge in teaching, provision of well-equipped and functional libraries, laboratories and well-ventilated classrooms that can promote effective teaching and learning.

NATION'S EXPECTATIONS FROM TEACHERS

The importance of teachers in the development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. Nigeria has recognized this fact and made a policy statement that "no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers" (FRN, 2004).

In the light of this, the nation has spelt out the goals of teacher education as follows:

- i) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- ii) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- iii) To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community to national goals;
- iv) To provide teachers with the intellectual abilities for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations; and
- v) To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

The policy emphasizes that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained. Therefore, teachers are expected to render training or teaching of young Nigerians. It is also expected that teachers when consulted, will provide suggestions or

recommendations that will guide the nation in the education sector of the economy. Teachers are expected to help the nation in manpower production in every area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the importance of teacher education in every developing and developed nation as a catalyst for qualitative teachers in our schools, like Okebukola (2005) and Nnachi (2006) said that the training of teachers should not be haphazard. Additionally, those in-charge of training the teachers must ensure total commitment to their training. The following recommendations are made for quality performance in teacher education.

Selection of teacher trainees should be most carefully carried out. The situation whereby the candidates rejected by the other disciplines as a result of low grades and are absorbed by the teachers' institutes must be carefully looked into for the fact that teachers should be intellectually inclined.

Consideration should be given to the duration for teacher education especially with regard to the practical aspect (teaching practice) of the training. There should be more monitoring and supervision of teacher trainees during teaching practice by experienced and qualified professional teachers. The lecturers should devote their time to visit the teacher trainees for the specified period of teaching practice of twelve weeks. Nnachi (2008) has suggested that efforts should be made to introduce housemanship or internship as an aspect of training for teaching.

Effort should be made to streamline admission into teaching institutions. There should be thorough scrutiny for people selected as teacher trainees.

- ❖ Serious efforts should be made for the proper professionalization of teaching job.
- ❖ Professionals and qualified teachers should be made to take charge of education ministries and other related matters. These positions should not be politicized.

CONCLUSION

The teacher is the brain box for information transmission and intellectual enhancement. Consequently, proper training of the teacher is needed for the good of the society and the nation at large. It is obvious that there are challenges in teacher education in Nigeria. This should not deter Nigerians for qualitative teacher education. This shows that those who are to ensure that teacher education reaches the peak of performance have neglected it that teacher education can be anything in that those trainees would be teachers, hence they can be trained any how is not a good omen in that such teachers would not be able to perform as expected hence the goals of education cannot be achieved. Also, it would

affect pupils and students in that they would not be able to perform well in schools let alone passing external examinations and finally to ensure its contribution to the development and growth of nation building.

Efforts should then be made to follow the outlined recommendations for the improvement of teacher education in Nigeria. If this is done, the education of Nigeria will rise up to the highest expectation and performance that will make Nigeria an intellectual giant (Nnachi, 2008).

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