

## CHALLENGES TO QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN APPRAISAL

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### **Abstract**

Education is generally believed to be a catalyst for change. Government all over the world embrace it as an instrument for bringing about the desired change in the society and it is only the people with the right competences and capabilities that are active agents to effect the needed societal change. Teachers unquestionably come to mind when we talk of equipping the citizenry with the necessary skills and abilities to perform their roles in the society. The pertinent question is how prepared are the teachers to play their assigned roles? Development in educational sector in Nigeria points to the fact that all is not well with the quality of education in Nigeria. The concern of this paper therefore, is to look at some conceptual issues such as education, quality education, teacher education, challenges to teacher education, as well as proffering solutions that will make Nigerian education system resilient and responsive.

Of all the rights of man, the right to quality education is sacrosanct, albeit to that of life itself. The role of education in modern life cannot be over emphasized. Life without education, indeed, quality education, cannot be imagined in the contemporary world. It is for this reason that governments of various nations of the world make huge investments on education. Education transforms and reforms individuals and societies. It is a

prime factor in human capital development as well as being an agent for social change. Without education, one would hardly imagine the giant strides man has made in the world today. The enormous contributions man has made to world civilization - call them industrial revolution, improvements in science and medicine, information and communication technology, socio-economic and political transformations, architectural innovations,

effective and efficient health care delivery system, efficient management styles and techniques, etc – are all products of education.

While we adore the role of education in changing man and his society generally, the pertinent question is to what extent has education in Nigeria been able to deliver or being made to achieve the purpose for which it was designed? Nigeria as a nation, still grapples with the problem of political instability; in fact, many now believe that no political system works in Nigeria. Problem of under-development equally stares us in the face. Nigeria is still rated among the third world economies today. Equally significant too, Nigeria today is basking in misery, poverty and diseases, with life expectancy as low as 50 – 60 years of age. Poor nutrition and general poor living conditions are the stark realities of life in Nigeria. Clearly, all is not well with our country, notwithstanding our huge investment in education. What has gone wrong with the Nigeria system of education? In an attempt to find answers to these puzzling questions, the researchers intend to peruse the genesis of educational activities in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on teacher education and the challenges that lay on the way to its efficiency and effectiveness.

#### **Education – What it is**

To avoid the pitfall of winding academic discourse, it is safe to say that education is defined in various ways by scholars depending on their point of view. However, one thing is common among the

various definitions of education and that is the fact that it is seen as a preparation of an individual to enable him play his role in the society. In other wards, we can see education as the process of acquiring the values and competencies the individual requires in order to enable him live fully and contribute to the development of not just himself but of his society.

Abu (2001) in Yayock (2013) defined education as a tool used for the integration of an individual into the society so that he can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress. Education is a life-long process which helps to develop the potential of an individual in order to be useful to himself and the society at large. Education is thus a crucial factor in the development and harnessing of the potentials of an individual for useful participation and contribution to the society's culture of civilization.

#### **Teacher Education in Nigerian**

Teacher education, simply put, is the education and professional training of world-be teachers in knowledge, methods and techniques of teaching so that they can effectively take their place in classroom encounter.

Omeye, (2013) citing Afe (1992) saw teacher education as the training arm of the teaching profession, which is charged with the development of knowledge and skills as the basis for entry into the profession.

Yayock (2013) defined teacher education as “education given to a person assigned to work in schools with the responsibility of providing education for learners”. It is a set of activities and experiences designed to equip a prospective teacher with skills, competences and knowledge, with the view to making him a competent teacher a qualified one.

From the above, we can conclude that quality teacher education is basically training and producing competent teachers through equipping them with the required knowledge, skills and attitude before they assume the role of professional teachers. It is aimed at producing an academically and professionally qualified teacher, who is competent and can perform efficiently and effectively in classroom interaction.

#### **An Overview of Teacher Education**

Teacher education in Nigeria started as an offshoot of missionary activities. As early as 1472, history has it that Portuguese merchants had landed in Benin city for trading activities and this was followed by the missionaries who came to spread the gospel. Thus, commerce and religion thrived side by side along the coastal areas of Nigeria, spreading across Brass to Lagos. Realizing the need to communicate with the people, the missionaries started establishing schools along these trade routes, and before long education came to be an integral part of missionary activities in the area. The school curriculum then was limited in scope, heavily weighted on what was referred to as the three Rs –

reading, writing and Arithmetic. This was adequate to meet the needs of the missionaries whose sole concern was to get their learners/converts the ability to read the Bible and possibly to communicate in English language. Teachers, who were mostly missionary converts, were untrained and unqualified, and they worked under uncondusive learning environments (Fafunwa, 2004).

Osokoya, (2010) citing Afigbo, succinctly highlighted the predicament of early missionary schools in these words:

*Very few of the teachers in the schools in the protectorate hold any certificate or have any training as teachers. They are for the most part mission agents of whose duties (teaching in the mission schools) form only a part and no educational qualification or attainment are required for them.*

This situation was slightly changed between 1946 and up to the time of independence in 1960. With the coming of the 1946 Richards constitution, a historical landmark in the development of teacher education in Nigeria was created as regional governments were actively involved in the running of schools in their various regions. For instance, the Western Regional government embarked on free universal primary education in 1955 and Eastern Regional government in 1957. This necessitated the establishment of new teacher training colleges, while some old ones were expanded to meet the demand for teachers. The implementation of the

Universal Primary Education programmes in the 1950s came with its own challenges -- shortage of teachers. As more teachers were produced to meet the high demand, quality was short-changed for quantity. The stage was thus set for the production of half-baked teachers who in turn churned out “educated illiterates”. The expression “garbage in garbage out” most eloquently explains the scenario in educational cycle then, and ever since the problem persisted.

After independence in 1960, the need to expand educational facilities in the country to cope with the high demand for labour was felt. Government, in its wisdom, launched the universal primary education programme nationwide in 1976. Once again, the demand for teachers escalated. The then Federal Military Government responded by establishing many more teacher training colleges, giving bursary allowances to students in Colleges of Education/Faculties of Education as a way to boost student enrollment in educational courses. This led to explosion in enrollment of students in teacher training colleges/institute of education without a corresponding expansion of existing facilities. As expected, the quality of education in these institutions suffered once again.

### **Quality Teacher Education**

In the foregoing sections, the researchers have attempted to give a brief synopsis of teacher education programme in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education (2004) states the goals of teacher education as follows:

- *Produce highly activated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;*
- *Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;*
- *Help teachers fit into social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;*
- *Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations;*
- *Enhance teacher’s commitment to the teaching profession.*

The policy further stipulated that teachers at all levels of education should be professionally trained and that education shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. The policy recognizes the teacher as a key element in the education industry, emphasizing that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers”. Giving the significant role of a teacher, it is expected that any education system that fails to prepare teachers adequately to fulfill their assigned roles begs the question of relevance. A professionally trained teacher should demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency in work place that would ultimately enhance productivity. And this is what quality teacher education is all about - functionality, relevance and creativity.

Kalu, (2006) saw quality education as a “system of learning that

produces well-educated individuals who can handle matters of concern within their area of study.” Such education, he further maintains, “imposes desirable qualities such as moral ethics in individuals”. He also cites the Flemish Association for Development and Technical Assistance (WOB) 2002 as defining quality education as:

*One that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develops sustainable livelihood, contribute to peaceful democratic societies and enhance individual well-being.*

Awuru, (2013) opined that quality education is one which produces a complete man, and citing the Universal Development Human Right article 26, he maintained that “education shall be directed to a full development of human personality”. If this is true, quality education will be seen as that which equips the individual with vital ingredients for his full development for living, and participating actively in the affairs of his society. He is in a position to shape and control the circumstances of his life, and can take his destiny and that of his society in his hands.

Good quality education, according to UNESCO (2002) is one that is effective for the purpose for which it was designed, has enduring/ sustainable development, is resource – efficient and translates into substantive rather than symbolic access. It further identified the following as its attributes:

Relevance

Responsiveness  
Equity and inclusion  
System efficiency  
Competencies  
Lifelong learners  
Teaching and learning environment  
Learner and teachers  
Financing etc

Ijiga, (2003) opined that qualitative education is concerned with the improvement in curriculum content, methods of teaching/learning, efficient school management techniques, conducive environment for teaching and learning, in order to bring about desired changes in learners. Quality education is measured in terms of the extent to which education is able to contribute to the fullest development of the learner. He also identified the following as indices of qualitative education:

- *Relevant and functional curriculum*
- *Appropriate teaching methods*
- *quality instructional materials and resources*
- *quantity and quality of input*
- *well trained and motivated teachers*
- *student teacher ratio*
- *student – classroom ratio*
- *school climate and general tone of the school*
- *moral and spiritual training*
- *well organized mid-day meals*
- *planning, administration and efficiency of inspection and supervision*
- *condition of school attendance*

- *distribution of hours among the different subjects in the curriculum*
- *Availability of suitable textbooks and other learning resources*
- *Well-equipped libraries and resources centres and laboratories.*

Quality education is that which leads to empowerment. It is a process of strengthening individuals, organizations and even communities so as get more control over their situation.

### **Challenges to Quality Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The greatest challenge to quality teacher education in Nigeria has to do with input factor. Here, the authors intend to focus attention more on quality of candidates admitted into the various colleges of education/faculties of Education. No doubt, the academic and emotional qualities of intending teachers for training are critical for quality assurance and internal efficiency for professionalism in teaching (Osokoya, (2016). This is in line with International Labour Organization (ILO's) recommendation that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. In Nigeria, admission into teacher training institutions is based mainly on academic requirements to the neglect of other considerations such as emotional stability, physical uprightness and communication proficiency, among others.

Besides, the general trend in admission into higher institutions of learning in Nigeria is that the "Chaffs" are

reserved for education courses. In other words, it is the candidates who are denied admissions to more popular or preferred courses such as law, medicine, engineering, architecture, etc that find their way into education courses. Even atimes, admission requirements are ridiculously made lower for courses in education compared to those in other more notable departments. If candidates for teacher training programmes are not selected based on rigorous and competitive screening exercises, how can we guarantee the quality of the in-take? The faulty admission process for the selection of world-be teachers has implication for the quality of teacher education in Nigeria as the formation of the teacher, rather than curricular, methods or even content, is the key to a good education system.

Ibidapo-Obe (2007) argued that education system is a system comprising various sub-systems and that there is a functional relationship between the sub-systems, such that a fault or defect in one sub-system affects other sub-systems. In his final analysis, he submitted that input determines output, maintaining that the decline in the quality of candidates admitted at any one level of education has a spillover effect on others.

Another major problem plaguing teacher education in Nigeria is inadequate institutional facilities. The researchers have mentioned earlier in the course of their discussion, the constraints surrounding teacher education even at the pre-independence missionary era. Then, besides limited scope of school

curriculum, acute shortage of institutional facilities such as classrooms, libraries, laboratories and other support facilities was a common feature in educational establishments due to limited finances. After independence and with full government participation in teacher education, the situation was not much different. Realizing the urgent need to educate the citizenry as a way to meet the manpower/development needs of the country, government embarked on massive teacher education programmes with the view to provide the much needed teachers. This resulted in explosion in school enrollment and high demand for teachers. The facilities available were stretched to their limit and even became quite inadequate. In the face of gross inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, it becomes difficult to assess the level of professional development of a teacher. It does not matter the level of professional training a teacher may receive he will remain a frustrated individual if the basic instructional facilities are lacking.

Curriculum content is yet another serious area to consider in assessing the quality of the Nigerian teacher. The common argument in academic cycle today is that the content of most education courses are not as rich as those of non-education courses in similar disciplines. For example, many in Nigeria believe that a graduate with B.A (Hons) in English or B.Sc (Hons) in Geography, Economics or any other subject for that matter is superior to his counterpart with B.Ed in similar discipline. They argue that teacher training programmes place undue

emphasis on methodology at the expense of content. And that, no matter how grounded a teacher might be in methodological approach, he will not be effective and efficient in the discharge of his duties if he is poorly grounded in content area.

Agheuta (1992), Mkpka (2000) and Osuji (2007) identify with the argument above, lamenting the shortcomings in the sandwich B.A./B.Sc education programmes in comparison to regular full-time programmes. They variously highlight shortcomings in sandwich education programmes to include lower entry qualification, shorter course duration, reduction in the scope of course content, commercialization of examination grades, constraints of expensive handouts which must be bought by students, among others.

Osokoya, (2010) singled out the National Teachers Institute's (NTI) programmes as constituting a serious challenge to quality teacher education in the country. Citing Obannya (2004) and Enukora (2003), he maintained that most of the teachers upgraded to Teachers Grade II by N.T.I were very deficient not only in the academic subjects they teach, but also in techniques of teaching. The most disheartening challenge is the ongoing pivotal teacher training programme, he concluded.

Government undue interference in educational matters is equally taking its toll on the quality of teacher education. It is common knowledge in Nigeria today that political party agents who have successfully fought to install their party as

the ruling party are often rewarded with admission into higher institutions of learning, or appointment in the public service by official fiat. Such admissions or appointments normally violate laid-down procedures as political consideration rather than academic credentials takes precedence. Many candidates who enter school through such means are not adequately prepared for serious academic work and are not quite amenable to learning. Other unsavoury acts of the government posing challenges to quality teacher education include in-adequate funding of educational institutions, poor motivation and remuneration, instability in policies and poor implementation of policies and vagueness in policy formulation. A combination of these factors constitutes constraints to quality teacher education in Nigeria. (Obodumu, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

Education holds the key to sustainable development and growth. No nation can afford to toil with the provision of good quality education for its citizenry and hope to survive in the modern complex world. Therefore, teacher education is accorded top priority by nations of the world. But the development of quality teacher education in Nigeria is riddled in crisis, owing to a number of factors such as non-attractiveness of the profession, low status rating or negative perception of the teacher by the society, low entry qualification, inadequate educational facilities, absence of in-service or continuing education facilities

for the teacher, non-attendance to workshops, seminars and other programmes designed to update teachers knowledge in consonance with changes in curriculum and the global society, instability and inconsistency in government policies as well as lack of political will and/or government interference in execution of school programmes, and teacher's poor perception of himself and his job. Any attempt to address the current question of quality of the products of our educational institutions can be traced to a combination of these factors.

Any attempt, therefore, to move the country out of this social malaise must address the issue of quality teacher education seriously as in deed, no education can rise above the quality of its teacher and no nation can rise above the quality of its education (NPE, 2014).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the foregoing the following recommendations are proffered.

1. Improved curriculum content should be designed for teacher education programmes at the various levels of education to make them attractive and competitive to similar programmes that are not biased to the teaching profession.
2. Admission requirement/course content/duration of course for educational courses should be made comparable to similar courses that are run out side departments of education.
3. Professionalization of teaching should be done in a manner to make a teacher truly professional as is the case in

some other notable professions like law, medicine, etc

The Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria should establish a body charged with the professional development and work ethics for teachers.

4. Access to teacher education programmes should be made to conform to the laid down standards by International Labour Organization (ILO).

5. Funding of teacher education programmes should be strengthened to make the teaching-learning environment conducive to the teacher to operate.

6. Systematic re-training programmes via workshops seminars and other refresher courses should be organized regularly for teachers to update their knowledge in the light of changes in the curriculum and the wider society.

7. Teacher motivation should be given top priority to attract new entrants into the profession as well as to retain those already in the field.

8. Teachers motivation should be given top priority; in fact, education should be teacher centred

9. There should be consistency and stability in government policy towards teacher education in Nigeria

10. Priority attention should be given to the provision of physical facilities in schools as well as instructional materials to enhance teachers effectiveness

11. More attention should placed on the maintenance and/or expansion of existing school structures rather than building new schools

12. Teachers should develop positive attitude about themselves and their work as well as cultivating work ethics

13. Entry into the teaching profession should be guarded and preserved for the professionals alone.

14. The society should accord teachers good recognition and acceptance to enable them to bring out the best in them.

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