CAPACITY BUILDING OF TEACHERS AS A STRATEGY IN BRIDGING THE GAP IN NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract
Recognizing that clear standards and strong incentives alone for teachers are not sufficient to transform teaching and translate educational policies and reforms into reality, building capacity for teachers who implement these policies become imperative. In the school system, the most important asset is its teaching force. Education reformers are urging that all students meet new and more challenging expectation for learning. Within the context of systemic reforms and policy in education, teachers’ students and schools are being called on to drastically change the ways they do their work. But do the teachers have the ability and capacity to meet these demands? This paper would examine the concept of capacity building in education, capacity building strategies of teachers and review the various institutions responsible for capacity building of teachers in Nigeria. It would also discuss different dimensions of teachers capacity building in translating policies to practice, challenges in implementing these policies would also be enumerated and solutions or recommendation would also be made.

Education is the greatest device man has created for his own continued improvement. It trains his head, hand, heart and has placed him in the position of leadership on earth. Education gives man understanding and enlightenment, improves his intellect, knowledge and skills as well as attitudes to his environment (Chukwu, 2009).

With education and capacity building forming the core of UNESCO’s work in such field by promoting technical and vocational education, improving the quality of education, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new information and communications technologies by tailoring education and training to the special needs of particular groups with the society. Educational leaders/reformers across the globe recognize that transformation of the system and implementation of educational

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policies, innovations, researched based programmes that address the educational system can only be achieved by capacity building and professional development. The position of teachers in the delivery of education and implementation of educational policies is substantial.

According to Building Capacity for Education Reform briefs 2008, teachers are the field agents of educational change and reform.

As stated by the leaders in action agenda for new economy sustainable development, Governments together with stakeholders in the educational system should promote innovation and entrepreneurship and build human capacity and knowledge through comprehensive and high quality education, training and skills development programs.

To bridge this gap from policy to practice in the educational sector, the government should promote quality education as a goal, including basic education, and distance learning as a means of sharing ideas; capacity building of all stakeholders in the institutions and exploiting opportunities presented by the rapid development of information communication technologies.

Educational changes are likely to accompany not only change in curriculum (learning) in terms of subject taught and syllabus, school conditions such as environment, infrastructures, social changes, community restiveness and conflict and advancement of information communication technologies impact on teachers capacity to cope and meet these challenges in order to implement educational policies and respond effectively to the growth and development needs of the students as well as those of the relevant institutions. Therefore capacity building of teachers is very imperative.

Most capacity building strategies in education today target and focus on the procedural knowledge and skills of teachers and ignore the other aspects of the educational system that directly or indirectly impact on teachers’ ability to teach. While many types of knowledge are vital to teacher’s roles, other areas of capacity building are important. The key questions are:

Do Nigerian teachers have the capacity to perform their roles and face the challenges of the 21st century educational system? What are the current state of the Nigerian teachers in capacity building for educational reform and what are the implications of this for quality education, sustainability and in achieving Nigerian educational goals?
This paper explores a crucial but neglected area of educational reforms – capacity building of teachers as a strategy in bridging the gap in the Nigerian educational system.

**The Concept of Capacity Building**

The concept of capacity building has become an important word in education reform discourse internationally both in developed and emerging economies (Egbo, 2011). Capacity is “the ability to understand or do something and “building is “an increase in the amount of something over a period of time.

Capacity is the ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform their functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably. Therefore capacity building is the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to

a. Perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives.

b. Understand and deal with their development needs in a broad content and in a sustainable manner (UNDP, 1998). There is no singular definition of capacity building, over the years according to UNESCO (2005), capacity building has moved from being a focus to concern individuals, individual training, the development of institutions and recently to complex systems philosophy when individuals’ capacities are linked with those of institutions and systems at large. Recently capacity building definitions emphasized the continuing process of strengthening of abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and understand and deal with developmental needs (UNESCO, 2005).

Capacity building has to do with the allocation of and investment resources, physical, intellectual, or human especially when other intervening variables have failed within a given institutional or social contest.

Chukwu (2009) in his opinion identified capacity building as skills/developments and knowledge needed by groups in order to participate fully in the labour market.

Within the context of systemic reform, capacity is the ability of the education system to help all students meet more challenging standards.

The use of the term “capacity building” is based on the definition established at the 1992 United Nations Conference in Environment and Development (UNCED) which encompasses human, scientific, technological organizational resources and capabilities.
UNCED recognized that the fundamental goal of capacity building is to enhance the abilities of stakeholders to evaluate and address crucial questions related to policy choices and different options for development. It is a conceptual approach to development that focuses on understanding the obstacles that inhibit people, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations from realizing their developmental goals while enhancing the abilities that will allow them to achieve measurable and sustainable results. (Wikipedia free encyclopedia).

Capacity building in education refers to the wherewithal needed to translate high standards and incentive into effective instruction and strong student performances (CPRE, 1998).

United Nations Development Project (UNDP) further defines capacity building as a long-term continuing process of development that involves all stakeholders including ministries, local authorities, NGO’s, professional, academics and more. It involves using a country’s human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resources capabilities. UNDP outlines that capacity building takes place in an individual level, an institutional level and the societal level. According to McDonnel and Elmore (1991) as cited in Delaney, (2002), the benefits of capacity are consequential, “in the short-term they accrue to the specific individuals and institutions that are recipients but the ultimate beneficiaries are future members of the society whose interest cannot clearly be determined in the present. Therefore capacity building in education is important for the attainment of educational objectives and its sustainable development.

The State of Nigerian Teachers in Capacity Building for Educational Policy

Capacity building in education is important both for the effective functioning of the educational system as well as the capacity building in other sectors of the economy. Most of the other sectors in the society rely upon a well functioning national education system in order to develop and improve their own capacity. Capacity building has significant impact on the teacher-learners and on the success of educational reforms. Since 1905 when the first department of education was established in Nigeria (Ukeje and Disiku, 1982), the issue of government direct involvement in the form of policy enunciation started to have formal scope although the first government secondary school was established in 1909. (i.e. Kings College Lagos.)

Since then educational reforms in Nigeria have evolved at regional and later on national levels. The Nigerian independence in 1960 led to a sort of uniformity in national educational policy and reforms. This was a product of the 1973 seminar which generated into the policy document tagged “National Policy on Education”. By the year 2004, the 4th contemporary edition of the policy document was released.
(Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). In 2006, another reform blueprint in education was launched by then Chief Olusegun Obasanjo regime. The loophole or gap was that those who will implement this policy, the teachers, were not fully involved in the policy enunciation (Solanke, 2012).

On this abnormality, Obanya (2007) stated that “culture oriented education policy should be a cycle process that does not draw sharp line demarcation between formulation and implementation. The situation should not be one in which the curriculum is formulated by the elite class for others to implement. Obanya (2007) identified another cog in the wheel of educational policy in Nigeria as the non-planning for policy implementation with the stakeholders and teachers along with the process of its formulation. When the process of implementation and the availability of the instructors (teachers) were not considered, and even if considered a pragmatic effort to build their capacity was not carried out with the formulation process, which results to problematic implementation.

Notwithstanding, what a country adopts as a desirable practice, be it direct/explicit instruction or child centered, activity-oriented pedagogy, the availability of crops of competent teachers stands as a condition for successful implementation of its educational reforms. In the case of Nigeria, massive student academic failure has been attributed in part, to teachers, who as the argument goes, have not been carrying out their primary mandates of teaching and promoting quality learning with quantifiable success.

There are many challenges Nigerian teachers are facing today as has been reviewed in literatures.

Gimba (2012) reported that there is no doubt that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This means that to achieve a functional education system, the teachers must be able to respond to educational changes to achieve such objectives. He noted also that the fear of change is very fundamental to human nature. In most cases, teachers have the tendency to resist change and insist on old practices.

**Institutions Responsible for Capacity Building of Teachers in Nigeria**

Years back, capacity building of teachers was in-service training, consisting of short-term courses that would offer teachers new information on a particular aspect of his work (Chukwu 2009). These following institutions acclaimed to give professional training as enunciated by the Federal Government in Revised National Policy of Education 2004 thus:
National Teachers’ Institute (NTI): An Institution established to upgrade Grade II teachers. Their specific mandate is to train teachers at the primary school level. They provide in-service for teachers on the job in order to upgrade their skills.

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE): This commission was established for the specific purpose of prescribing minimum standards for colleges of education in Nigeria. They supervise the production of middle level manpower for the school system.

Institute of Education: Established in Universities for the training of teachers. Not all universities have institutes of Education. They are to train teachers for the secondary school level. They provide pre and in-service training. They produce high level man-power.

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE): This Board co-ordinates the activities of Polytechnics and technical colleges and prescribes minimum standards for the post primary school level.

National Universities Commission (NUC): Oversees the activities of the Universities in Nigeria. It coordinates and sets standards for universities.

National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA): Builds capacity of planners and managers at all levels of education in the system. Its main role is to strengthen the capacity of these planners and managers and all workers in the education sector at all levels.

Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC): Develops curriculum for ECCE, primary and ISS. It also builds capacity of teachers on the effective utilization of various curricula developed.

UNDP, UNFPA UNIFEM, World Bank, UNICEF, DFID, UNESCO, USAID: These are United Nations bodies responsible for provision of technical support, funding, equipment and services in all sectors of the economy including the education sector. They have been supporting Nigeria in the area of basic education, secondary, technical, vocational and higher education through capacity building, research, provision of equipment and other assistance as relates to capacity development;

Other Professional Bodies Include
National Union of Teachers (NUT): A trade union for teachers particularly at primary school levels. It is not a professional organization. It sees to the welfare of the members.
Teacher’s Registration Council (TRC): Is a body established by law to make teaching a profession (professionalized teaching). The minimum qualification for registration is National Certificate in Education (NCE). It provides support for the professionalization of teachers. It registers teachers and ensures that only qualified teachers are in the education sector.

Currently, according to Egbo (2011) “there is a general perception that a significant number of Nigerian teachers are not equipped to deliver quality education for a number of interconnected reasons, among them being training-related, issues in policy, structural, curricular, infrastructural limitations and low morale. The colossal failure of all levels of students in the country’s institutions is a clear indication of the fact that there are significant problems within the educational system. This shows that students in Nigeria are not receiving the kind of education that will prepare them for life in a competitive 21st century that demands innovations, creativity, critical thinking skills, information communication technologies, vision, adaptable and transferable skills (Egbo, 2011).

Increasing student’s achievement depends on teachers whose performance in turn hinges in building their capacity. Educational curriculum at all levels of educational system should be reformed and be broadened to make the students self-sufficient and self sustaining.

The Nigerian teacher has a challenge of adopting educational curriculum that was not adapted to the cultural/regional/geographical zones of the country by integrating the social circumstances of each tribe in Nigeria with the national needs.

Inadequacy of Infrastructural Facilities in our Educational Institutions

In some cases, equipments are supplied to the schools without corresponding instructors and relevance to the subjects or useful to the school. In some schools, and communities without power supply, electrically operated technical equipments were supplied in their workshops without providing the source of electricity to power them. Many of such equipment are lying waste and vandalized in such workshops.

Another challenge facing Nigerian teachers in implementing educational policy is political leadership perception of education. Solanke (2012) writes “that most Nigerian leaders do not take educational investment as of futuristic. Investment, as a foundation upon which the future of the nation will be built. Thus the funds voted for education are grossly inadequate. No wonder, teachers are not well motivated and their welfare packages are not met which leads to frequent strikes of teachers in our educational institutions.
Educational reforms bring about changes and innovations in the educational system, in the teachers and in the society. There is no doubt that in Nigeria, teaching and the educational system need refocusing, a new orientation which can only be achieved through continuous capacity building both at the human resources (teachers), institutional levels (management structures) or proceedings and legal framework (leadership) for quality education delivery and sustainability.

**Capacity Building of Teachers: Implications for Educational Development**

Capacity building has significant impact on the teachers, learners and on the success of educational reforms. The more professional knowledge the teacher has the higher the levels of activities he performs examples;

a. Control (e.g. governance, authority and oversight functions)

b. Planning and design (organization of work area and strategies, equipment and resources to be used)

c. Implementation (execution of the work plans)

d. Evaluation (assessment of the work process and the outcomes)

Implementation of these educational reforms and policies are left in the hands of teachers who must provide instructions within a highly detailed framework that is set out.

Teachers are central to successful school reforms. Research has rarely examined how teachers experience reform initiatives and how these experiences shape their capacity for improved teaching that leads to greater students’ achievement (Mattos, 2011).

Capacity building of teachers enables them to offer students the learning opportunities that will prepare them to meet world class standards in a given content area and successfully assume adult responsibilities for citizenship and work. It should also empower individual teacher and community of educators to make complex decisions, identify and solve problems, to connect theory, practice and student outcomes (Chukwu, 2009).

Within the context of the 21st century, there is a renewed emphasis on the quality of teachers and teacher education; indeed, no nation can build a strong and effective educational system without the continuous appraisal and subsequent improvement of its teaching/training programmers since teachers remain the pillars of the system (Niyozoo, 2008). For the realization of the millennium development goals of the 21st century and its programmes, capacity building of teachers paramount. However, none of the programmes will be successful without availability and capacity building of teachers in all levels of the Nigerian educational system.
Therefore capacity building of teachers for educational reforms stands as a strategy for successful implementation and sustain ability in the Nigerian educational system.

Capacity Building of Teachers as a Strategy in Bridging the Gap in Nigerian Educational System

Capacity building of teachers at all levels of education in Nigeria should be multidimensional, and evolving, broad and embracive since the United Nations Conferences on Environment and Development (UNCED) recognized that the fundamental goals of capacity building is to evaluate and address crucial questions related to policy choices and different options for development.

In building teachers capacity, the strategy should embrace the UNCED’s aspirations and focuses on the educational goals and needs as enshrined in the National Policy on Education. For this paper, the following strategic areas will be discussed;

1. Building Capacity for Educational Policy: The Federal Government of Nigeria is cognizant of the importance of availability of qualified teachers in the achievement of its national development objectives as well as to meet its commitment to international initiatives as Education for All (EFA) achieving basic education 2015, and the Millennium Development Goals 2020. In view of this, the importance of capacity building of teachers in developing a viable, sustainable education system, the revised National Policy on Education (2004) stipulates that “all teachers in educational institutions should be professionally trained based on clear goals and objectives. Other institutions, sectors goals in Federal Government e.g National Economic Empowerment and Development (NEEDS) also emphasized the importance of capacity building of teachers in education. Lethwood (1992) cited in Chukwu (2009) advised that programmes which will promote capacity building of teachers for educational sustainability should focus on;
   a. Developing survival skills, becoming competent in basic skills and expanding teacher’s instructional flexibility,
   b. Acquiring instructional expertise,
   c. Contributing to the professional growth of their colleagues and
   d. Exercising leadership and participating in decision making for effective implementation of educational policies.

2. Building Teacher’s Knowledge and Skills: Building teachers knowledge and skills is a crucial component of change and reform in education. Teachers need knowledge of subject matter, curriculum, students and subject –specific pedagogy in order to impact and help students to learn. To do this effectively, teachers’
dimensions of capacity building have to be understood because the new global standards for education calls for the students to acquire deeper thinking and problem solving abilities, creativity and entrepreneurial skills. To help the students reach these new standards, Nigeria teachers must have a deeper and more flexible base than is needed for basic skills. In traditional in-service programs, while skills and knowledge interact and develop together, researchers have demonstrated a considerable gap between teacher’s beliefs, (his disposition) about how they should be teaching to satisfy new educational reforms and their abilities to actually put it into practice (CPRE policy brief 1995). Enacting educational reforms requires a disposition to meet a new student learning and to make a necessary change in practice by the teacher. National Centre for Research on Teacher Education (1988) wrote that important disposition of teachers’ attitudes toward subject matter, attitudes towards students, attitudes towards change, expectation for student achievement and beliefs about students’ success and commitment towards student learning are crucial components of teacher dispositions particularly in view of educational reform of high performance for all students. Unfortunately, despite the extensive policy enactment and legislation, teacher education, and the teaching profession in Nigeria remain problematic. Therefore capacity building of teachers should include a reconceptualization of the processes that are involved in teacher certification and licensure (Egbo, 2011).

3. **Curriculum and Instruction (Pedagogy):** Like the focus on building teachers’ capacity in knowledge and skills, improving the curriculum and instruction to reflect the present day global economy, serves as an essential strategy for bridging the gap in Nigerian educational system. In Nigerian school system today, some teachers have continued to adhere to the traditional pedagogical orientations that are based on learning skill. Some have not changed their orientation of role performances as simply transmitting their official knowledge that they are mandated to teach. Sometimes those who want to adopt empowering strategies as routine practices are constrained by lack of the pedagogical knowledge to do so (Egbo, 2011).

To bridge this gap in the 21st century which is charged with the atmosphere of accountability and standard based reforms, information communication technologies, policy makers should seek to align the curriculum and instructions vertically to National Educational Policies at all levels and horizontally to other elements of school system and school practice.

To this effect, in-service and capacity building teachers’ programmes on curriculum and pedagogy should be geared towards:-

a. Using local materials to support teaching
b. Integrating technology across the curriculum.
c. Using learner centered approaches to teaching and learning (e.g. experiential and inquiry learning).

d. Teaching for sustainability in education.

e. Effective classroom management and assessment

f. Teaching for social justice

g. Strategies for upholding the standards of the profession

h. Provision of customized technical and scientific training ground in real world experience and evidence based practice

i. Building teachers capacities on competence oriented education

j. Offering of capacity workshops and training, technical assistance packages which will help the teachers to reform initiatives fully and successfully.


4. **Provision of Modern Infrastructure:** Capacity building of teachers goes with the availability of infrastructures for the teachers to teach effectively. For quality delivery of educational goals and sustainable development of Nigerian school system, the availability of modern infrastructures to meet the standard based reforms is imperative. Most of the facilities and educational infrastructures in most of the Nigerian institutions are dilapidated and absolute. Although a lot of improvement have been made by some state governments to upgrade these infrastructures, much is also needed especially in most of public owned schools in local/rural areas where some teachers have no chairs, tables, staffrooms, unequipped or no laboratories, libraries, lack of ICT’s, agric farms and lack of electricity etc. Building teacher capacity means that policy makers/stakeholders in education must provide the necessary resource materials that are required to teach effectively by the teachers.

Given the prevailing learning conditions of our educational institutions, it should not be surprising that there is a gap in educational policy and actual practice in Nigerian educational system.

5. **Building of Organizational Capacity:** Teachers practice and effectiveness is shaped in part by the contexts (society/community) in which they work and learn including the communities formed by their relationships with other professionals inside and outside the school system. There is an interdependence of organizational, structural and individual capacities of the teachers which implies that reform strategies should seek to build organizational capacity of various educational institutions and the stakeholders/organizations responsible for quality to bridge the gap in educational policies and in promoting capacity building of teachers. The organizational development in educational sector should be concerned with the elaboration of management structures, processes and procedures, not only within the school system but also the management
relationship between the different educational organizations and sector (i.e. public, private and community) through partnership, networking. Institutional and legal framework development should be strengthened by making legal and regulatory changes to enable these stakeholders, organization, institutions and agencies at all levels to enhance their capacity in coping with the challenges. Doing this, they will also have the capacity to develop, impact on human resources (teachers) in the educational system. Building organizational/institutional capacity will help to develop in the teachers a community of practice that will facilitate the sustainability of the programmes/policies and their results.

6. Building Teacher’s Capacity through Welfare and Empowerment: For the development and realization of educational goals, quality education transcends building teachers’ capacity for knowledge, skills, and curriculum but should include building teachers’ welfare and empowerment. In every level of the education system, low morale and motivation often lead to poor teacher performance and invariably affect students’ outcome. As rightly pointed out by Odofot (2005).

Nigerian teachers are the most traumatized and the most de-motivated in the world from the primary to the tertiary level. They are …de-motivated right from the time they were recruited into the profession through their training to the period of deployment. Even when they retire from the service they are not paid their retirement entitlement..., this phenomenon does not only affect the job performance of the Nigerian teacher but also his [or her] psyche. .. If it is true that the teacher is the key person in the education system whose training could mar or improve the education results, it could be argued that the much talked about qualitative education in Nigeria now and in future would be an illusion if the circumstances of the Nigerian teacher are no improved (p. 73).

Therefore effective capacity building of teachers’ calls for those who are charged with teaching the nation’s children, subsequently implementing the educational policies at all levels of the educational system should be treated with principles of social justice with their counterpart in other professions and organization.

Conclusion

The need for building teachers’ capacity as a strategy to bridge the gap in Nigerian educational system if educational goals are to be realized has been highlighted.

The main thrust of this paper is that there is a dire need for capacity building of teachers in Nigeria to bring the desired transformation of the Nigerian educational system. This strategy involves setting professional development standards for capacity building of teachers, providing, structuring and controlling access to
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professional development, providing curriculum and modern instructional materials, building external relationship in technical and scientific assistances and provision of 21st century infrastructures in schools to meet the global standards of sustainable education, organizing and proper/adequate allocation of resources in the educational sector.

Recommendation

If the gap in the implementation of educational policies is to be bridged, the following recommendations are made:

1. Capacity building of teachers’ programmes should be multidimensional and evolving.

2. A TRANSIT approach to capacity building should be adopted in the educational system which will help the teachers to contribute to the development of creativity and adaptation to the rapidly changing circumstances and the society brought about by reforms; to improve teachers awareness of key competencies and social development needed for educational policies; to develop teachers professional skills in the adaptation and implementation of educational policies; to raise awareness of the teachers new pedagogical knowledge approach to teaching for sustainability and social justice; to assist educational leaders to foster and implement innovations that will support teachers capacities in judging the gap between policy and everyday implementation of key programmes in the educational system for quality delivery.

3. In capacity building for teachers, strategies and approaches to educational policy should include use of performance data and other educational data to plan capacity. By building programmes/activity to identify achievement gaps and align curriculum and instructions to assign and evaluate key personnel needed in the system this will help to improve standards.

4. 21st century infrastructure to meet the 21st century needs and challenges should be adequately provided in all the levels of Nigerian educational system through provision and accessibility of information communication technologies to meet the modern day technological needs of the educational system.

5. Welfare packages of teachers should be improved to reflect the realities of the modern day economy

6. To develop in the teachers a community of practices that will facilitate the sustainability of educational programmes/policies and its results through a global partnership and networking with other international institutions and stakeholders in the educational sector.
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