

# ACHIEVING NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A COMPETENCY - BASED TEACHER EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

Human resource is very critical for national development. Education is a vital instrument for developing the much needed human resources for national development. Since no nation can "develop meaningfully with unimproved people, teacher - education which is the mother of all educations should play a leading role in the development of human resources. Through the programmes of teacher - education, it is expected that the right calibre of teachers should be turned out who in turn will develop other human resources very critical to national development. Based on this, all efforts should be harnessed towards putting in place sound, effective and functional teacher education programmes to perform its task successfully for the benefit of all. It must be competency-based. This is the focus of this paper.

## **Introduction**

Human resource constitutes a strategically important part of a people's natural resources. It forms the engine of development. Among other resources, it occupies a more strategic component of that engine of development. Human resource is the crankshaft in the engine of development. An engine without a crankshaft or one that has a faulty shaft will either not start at all, or will on starting wobble seriously. It cannot channel the energy so produced in the engine into machine work which, in this case, is development.

The statements above have serious implications for proper human development which in turn engenders national development. The physical and mental capacity of man must be developed to a certain level to allow for the harnessing of other resources. Thus, human resources must first be developed and conserved if a people is to survive and flourish. This development is achieved through education which provides a means for each person to develop his capabilities.

Okafor (1984) pointed out that in order to develop fast enough, a developing nation must place its ultimate priority on education. He went further to say that even developed nations will begin to move backwards as soon as educational priority is swept under the rug. Again, he pointed out that the greatest donation a leader can make to his people is a careful development of the human powers of that nation.

In Nigeria, education has been adopted by the Federal Government as an important instrument for effecting national development through human development. The need for proper development of human resources is equally highlighted by Okwudiafor (1987) when he said:

It is the human resources of a nation, not its capital nor its material resources, that ultimately determine the nature, direction and pace of its socio-economic development. Essentially, nations are built through the creative, productive and innovative hard work of the people. At best, financial resources can only facilitate production, but real wealth is created by productive, labour activity.

Teacher - education is assumed to occupy the apex of national development. This is because its proper planning and execution has a multiplier effect on the development of the rest of the human resources that are very critical to national development.

## **Teacher - Education**

Education is critical to the development of any nation. It is an imperative for national development. The effectiveness of education in accomplishing this vital role is contingent on the production of qualified, efficient and effective teachers. It is the teacher who implements the educational programmes of a given nation and so remains the pivot of national development.

Education is what teachers make it and a competent, devoted and professionally spirited body of teachers is the essential foundation for a good educational system (Elegbe, 1969). Though education is clearly the greatest power yet devised by man and is equally a key that unlocks the door to modernization, it is the teacher who holds the key to the door. Hence teacher -education is the foundation for quality in the school and ultimately the determinant of national development, progress and even survival. Teachers and teacher-education are the determinants of the role of education-in social change. Ukeje (1991) opines that the key to the functionality of education is the teacher and by extension, teacher-education. Any genuine effort to effect development in Nigeria must start with an effective teacher and efficient teacher education.

As a developing nation, Nigeria needs an effective teaching profession which is perhaps the most vital, crucial and strategic of all professions for national development. This is because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Since education is the most potent instrument for change in any society, it becomes inevitable that the quality of education provided in any society and the nature of the change effected by that education are both dependent on the quality of teachers and their effectiveness in the schools. Unless the nation does something drastic and urgently to improve the quality of education through the improvement of teacher - education and training, Nigeria will continue to be tagged a developing nation. All that is required is functional and qualitative teacher education.

Ukeje (1991) describes teaching as (the most vital and strategic profession for national development. It is the teacher who in the final analysis translates policies into practices and programmes into action. He further opined that what the teacher knows and does can make a great difference and what he does not know, cannot do or fails to do can be an irreparable loss to the child.

Members of other professions may make mistakes. For instance, a mistake by a medical doctor may result in the death of a patient and the mistake by a lawyer may result in some one losing his liberty. These mistakes are however transient. But, if a teacher makes a mistake, generations yet unborn may suffer the consequences. Thus, the mistakes of a teacher are more devastating to the future generation than the mistakes of the members of any other profession.

As the teacher so is the taught. Indeed, it is upon their number, their quality, their devotion and commitment to duty, their effectiveness and efficiency, that depends the success and progress of any educational system and consequently, the future of any nation. Since it is the teacher who holds the key to the door of national development through his vital role in the training of the human resources needed for national development, it becomes a national suicide for any nation either by accident or by design to have its best brains cure its sick, design its roads and bridges, formulate and administer its laws, while its poorest brains teach its youth (Ukeje, 1991). Teacher education is as important as the nation's development itself. Problems impeding national development such as bribery and corruption, mismanagement of resources, inefficient and dishonest leadership, ethnicity, tribalism and disunity, economic and political instability, hardship and religious intolerance should

also be addressed by such teacher - education programme (Angaye, 1996). Further, Afe (1990) opines that teacher education is the bed rock for national development. This was amplified by Okafor (1984) when he held that no society can reach heights of greatness unless there is an ample supply of dedicated men and women in all fields critical to its growth and creativity. Invariably, these men and women are the ones to be trained and nurtured by the teacher himself.

To be able to play this vital role, there is need for qualified, honest, good quality, efficient and effective teachers to teach at all levels of the Nigerian educational system. This becomes urgent since the future of any nation rests in the hands of its teachers. -The quality they possess and exhibit today will inevitably be reflected in the behaviour of the citizens of tomorrow. Fafunwa (1967) noted that the teacher, directly or indirectly, is bound to influence the quality and the quantity of services provided by all other trades and professions. Whatever that gives birth, gives birth to its kind (quid quid generis, generis simile). This means that a poorly trained teacher will turn out it's like while a well trained teacher, the contrary.

### **Typology of Teacher - Education**

In order to produce the right calibre of teachers needed to move the nation forward, teacher education programmes should be competency - based and more result — oriented than at present. In competency - based teacher education programmes, the student - teacher must either be able consistently to demonstrate his ability to promote desirable learning or exhibit continuously behaviour known to promote it. He is held accountable not just for passing the prescribed examinations, but for attaining a given level of competence in performing continuously the essential task of teaching. The Colleges of Education are also to be held accountable for producing competent and dedicated teachers.

But to be able to do this, the Federal Government through the funding agencies like, the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) should also be held accountable for providing the necessary human and material resources for competency - based teacher - education. Staffing, recruitment and retention of adequately, qualified and competent professional educationists should be a matter of urgent national importance. All academic staff of teacher - education must be professionally qualified. A quack should not practice in a professional institution. If this is compromised, the nation would continue to wrestle with mediocrity or something worse. Okafor (1984) revealed that one of the worst things than can happen to a developing nation like Nigeria is to ridicule or downgrade intellectual competence and high academic achievements. So, to make a competency-based teacher education programme a reality, seasoned professional teachers should be recruited to. turn out men and women on whom the task of developing the minds of future generations depends.

Teacher - education programme should be geared towards the provision of education for living and not just education for certification. Okeem (1985) pointed out that increase in investment in education per se would not necessarily lead to increase in productivity. The nature, content and style of education would be crucial in determining the extent to which it would lead to development. Huge investment in "education for certification" for instance, is likely to be a drain on the economy and would not lead to faster economic or technological development nor to self - fulfillment of the individual. This is because such type of education is not equipped to be able to tackle issues.

On the other hand, "education for living" is better equipped to face the problems of rural development, community health, water supply, roads, housing and other self-help projects. It is this type of education that is likely to lead to authentic development in all its dimensions, local national and international, including self actualization for individuals. This is the type of education needed to effect the much needed national development (Okcem, 1985). It becomes imperative therefore that the nation operates a good and quality teacher-education programme based on education for living and equally competency -based. Such teacher education programmes should produce effective and efficient teachers who are occupationally competent both in various content areas and the skills required in the teaching profession.

### **The Role of the Administrator**

All the agencies and personnel concerned with the administration of Colleges of Education and other teacher- education programmes have vital roles to play in ensuring sound, effective and functional teacher - education programmes. The importance of education in national development emphasizes the importance of effective teaching. Thus, the teacher, makes obvious contributions to national development. Consequently, any factor that can influence the effectiveness of the teacher has some implications for national development. The role of the teacher is very vital and linked with the very survival of society (Maduevesi, 1988). Anything that diverts the attention of the teacher from his task of nation -- building is the greatest enemy to the national progress (Nwaogu, 1985).

Having said this, what should be the role of the educational administrator then? His role is to ensure that Colleges of Education are sufficiently equipped with resources such as manpower, finance and capital equipment. The teachers of the Colleges of Education should be well motivated. This can be done through remunerating them adequately and promptly. The conditions of service of teachers should be one of the best. Adequate facilities, should be provided for teacher - education programmes. These facilities together with professionally competent teachers will facilitate teaching and learning. When this is done, the teachers will work hard in their task of developing the minds that will help in developing other minds and generations unborn.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that education is the most powerful instrument of manpower development in any given society. People are the common denominator of progress and no improvement is possible with unimproved people. Any effort at national development must be preceded by the development of human resources. And since no nation can rise above the quality of its citizens; the development of relevant manpower becomes an imperative. Teacher- education programmes play vital roles in this regard. Since human development is a process of acquiring a good blend of material, mental, moral and spiritual resources to lead an educated, healthy and happy life, teacher education programme should be made to address this need. This should be treated as a matter of urgent national importance.

## **Recommendations**

The following are recommended:

- 1) The Federal Government should as a matter of urgent public importance equip the Colleges of Education with adequate, relevant and functional facilities for effective teaching and learning.
- 2) Colleges of Education should be staffed with seasoned experts and the best brains available in respective fields of specialization.
- 3) Staff should be taken care of adequately in respect of payment of salaries and allowances so as to motivate them to continuous high effort level.

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