

Teacher Education for Sustainable Functional Education in Africa

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Abstract

Acknowledged worldwide, education is the process through which one acquires knowledge, values, and skills that enable one to be useful to self and to the society. The progress of countries and peoples starts with education, especially functional education; a kind of education that is relevant to the needs and aspiration of the individual and the society; an educational provision that ensures relevant skills, knowledge, interests, motivation and attitude are acquired by the individual in order to function at his highest level of ability and capacity in the society. Sustainability of functional education in a society depends on the quality of her teachers; invariably, on her teacher education programme that prepares teachers for her education system. Based on the above assertion, it becomes necessary that African nations should invest in their teachers now. The training of teachers should be given adequate attention through qualitative and effective teacher education programme in order to instill professional competence and motivation relevant to sustaining functional education in the would-be teachers. Hence, in the classroom, the teachers would appropriately direct learning situations to transform the learners into effective, efficient, and useful members of the society. It is the prerogative of this paper to critically address the major concepts of the paper, such as: teacher education, functional education, and sustainable functional education. The paper also, determines the role teacher education plays in the effort to sustain functional education in Africa, followed by conclusion and suggestions.

Keywords: Education, Teacher Education, and Sustainable Functional Education

Africa is a great continent and the world's second largest continent. She is greatly endowed with human and material resources, great diversity of liquid and solid mineral resources, abundant forest and aquatic resources. Unfortunately, this continent so richly blessed has suffered a lot and still suffering. African peoples have been exploited for decades and are currently being ravaged by poverty and corruption. As a matter of fact, several countries of Africa are among the poorest in the world. One of these countries is Nigeria. Despite her abundant human and material resources, she lives in abject poverty (Nzekwe, 2016). Sadly, efforts to end this extreme poverty through the

instrumentality of education remains a huge challenge for most African countries. Presently, quality of life, education and human development are still low; many graduates roam streets seeking for jobs that do not exist. Majority of them stay at home hopelessly all day doing almost no-useful-thing. This situation has generated other social problems such as armed robbery, terrorism, kidnapping, abduction, touting, corruption, hunger, prostitution, drug and human trafficking etc. Worst of all, the best educated and skilled often choose to leave the continent for the west to seek a better life (Wikipedia, 2021). Notably, exploitation and suffering being experienced in most of these African countries is a consequence of dysfunctional education system. Most African countries had history of colonization and so inherited an imposed education system that is devoid of prompting true African values to the present African needs.

Notably, before the introduction of western education, Africa has an educational system, the traditional African education (TAE). The TAE is a type of education one acquires to fit into the society. It was based on functionalism. African society regarded education as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Therefore, TAE was for an immediate induction into the society and a preparation for adulthood. Hence, it emphasized personal responsibility, social responsibility, job orientation, political participation, spiritual and moral values needed in the society. Here, children learn to do by doing/practicing (participatory education), sometimes under the master trainer. They were involved in practical farming, hunting, dancing, and fishing, wrestling, weaving, cooking and carving and most importantly they obey their master-trainers. TAE (in Igbo cultural context) encouraged development of the child's character and morals, his intellectual skills; inculcating respect for elders and those in position of authority. It encouraged acquiring specific vocational training and developing healthy attitude towards honest labour. (Eneasator, 2006). Nobody is idle in those days and the lazy ones are labelled *efulefu* (*fools*). This is why many nations all over the world, including Africa today emphasize the need for education that is relevant to the needs of her citizens. An education that aims at producing graduates that the labour market wants; a functional education.

With the introduction of western education in most African countries, there was sharp deviation in the orientation of African education. African education became patterned along the western model and curriculum, rather than to the needs and aspiration of the Africans. The education system was aimed at teaching the citizens how to read, write and do a little arithmetic. By implication, it enabled the then-educated to effectively interpret the English language for other natives in order to ensure the colonial masters' businesses boom. The colonial masters never thought of the development of Africans for Africa nor encouraged acquisition of technical knowledge and skills for the colonized, hence the poor economic condition most African countries face today.

Notably, when African countries gained independence, they realized the need for major reforms in their education systems in order to reflect what was necessary for African society. This is because development of any society depends on active participation of all citizens and their social usefulness in productive occupation of the society. But these reforms were not adequate as education systems across Africa still emphasized the super-imposing needs for academic excellence, government

employment and nothing else (Chinwanza², 2019). Regrettably, much emphasis was placed on theoretical and academic knowledge as well as possession of certificates instead of on what one can do. Little wonder then, why education was biased and students are forced to load information on their heads for the purpose of passing exams only instead of equipping them to face positively the challenges of day to day living in the society.

The status/process of education such as, quality of education facilities, education management, teacher characteristics, student characteristics, curriculum, funding and accountability, mechanism of translating the curriculum e. t. c. are nothing to write home about compared to what is obtainable in other developed countries of the world. Apparently, education system in many nations of Africa is dysfunctional and the result of this dysfunctional education is that schools turn out graduates without useful knowledge and saleable skills, and who consequently become alienated from the society. Emphasis therefore, was on sustainable functional education, which is a prerogative of well-trained and qualified teacher produced through a functional teacher education programme, among other factors.

In fact, it is no more news that education in almost all African nations is in a pitiable condition. No wonder Nwunne (2011) laments that actual practice in the classroom, is almost a complete departure from the expected practice. It was in this light that President Akufo-Addo of Ghana, while addressing the audience at the Global Partnership for Education Conference in 2017, spoke passionately about the situation of education in Africa. According to him, discussions on education should not only focus on providing access to education but also on quality of education provided (Aremu, 2019). African countries would only move forward, according to Chinwanza¹ (2019), when its education is properly reformed.

Going by what is happening globally, education in Africa is fast becoming irrelevant in view of the ever-changing present dynamics of African existence. Most importantly, in today's world, Africa requires a new model/kind of education. That model of education is functional education, which equips the individual with basic enduring life skills for survival. A great deal of research has shown the benefits of functional education (Al-Ansari, 2006), which is possible with quality teachers, and among other factors, guarantees sustainable future. Needless to state that teacher education becomes a potent instrument for a sustainable future in Africa.

The role of education as the foundation of social, economic, political, and cultural development is undisputed (Agbowuro, Saidu, & Jimwan, 2017). The major goal of education in any nation is to prepare its citizens for responsible and productive adult life, so as to be able to function honestly, efficiently and effectively in the society in which they live (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). Indeed, the way people are taught in a country has huge impact on her level of innovations and development. No nation develops beyond the quality of its educational system, which is highly dependent on the quality of its teachers (Nana, Boaduo, Khazamula, & Daphne, 2011). Future of nations, they say, starts in the classrooms.

The point being made above, therefore, is that professional competence of teachers is a direct reflection of the quality of teacher education programme the teacher

received during training. Put differently, teachers needed to implement functional education require new initiatives in their preparation so that they can adequately meet the new challenges of sustaining functional education in Africa. In other words, when the teacher is effectively trained under the teacher education programme, the trained-teacher would in-turn use the knowledge, skills, capabilities and attitudes acquired as a result of training to bring about the high quality man power that turns around the available resources into wealth. This means that in the teaching-learning process, the trained teacher as a curriculum implementer is expected to apply effective teaching methods, skills, approaches, techniques and attitudes to bring about positive change in learners' attitudes, irrespective of personal or institutional challenges. Any measure of effort exerted to improve teacher education is in the right direction to sustainable functional education and betterment of the future for Africans. This paper, therefore, examines the linkages between teacher education and sustainable functional education in Africa. The paper was presented following the below outline:

1. The clarification of major concepts: functional education, sustainable functional education, and teacher education;
2. The linkage between teacher education and sustainable functional education;
3. Conclusion; and
4. Suggestions for the way forward.

Conceptual Clarification Functional Education

Functional education is education that is practical and useful, which addresses the needs and interests of the individual beneficiaries and the society at large. Thus, the recipient of functional education on graduation is able to be useful to himself and the society, having been equipped with relevant knowledge and skills needed for performance of productive tasks. Functional education in its total consideration is not just education that refers to the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. It is more encompassing, meaningful, interactive, practical and most desirable. This is because it empowers the recipients with the ability to sustainably explore without doubt, discover, functionally derive and maximally utilize the available resources of the nation (Nwogbo, 2017). No wonder Abiola (2020) posits it as education in which the ability to practice or perform productive task is more emphasized than ideological conformity and theory.

Thought for functional education originated in the United States and Western Europe. In the United States and in Germany, it refers to the type of education that comes spontaneously from the influence of the environment. They see it as a kind of education that is natural as opposed to the deliberate, goal-oriented education that is directed by man (Zeilberger, 2019). In Western Europe, functional education refers to education that comes from the child's needs that uses a child's interest as a mechanism for activating him towards his desirable activities. Its purpose being to develop the life of the mind that acts from the wholeness of organic life, with relation to practical life and values in the present and in the future. Africa and other developing countries perceive functional education as education that equips the child with the knowledge, skills and values needed for effective living within his environment and the world at large as the need arises. It is oriented towards acquisition of survival skills for service, productivity and contribution to the development of society (Ogbuji, 2013).

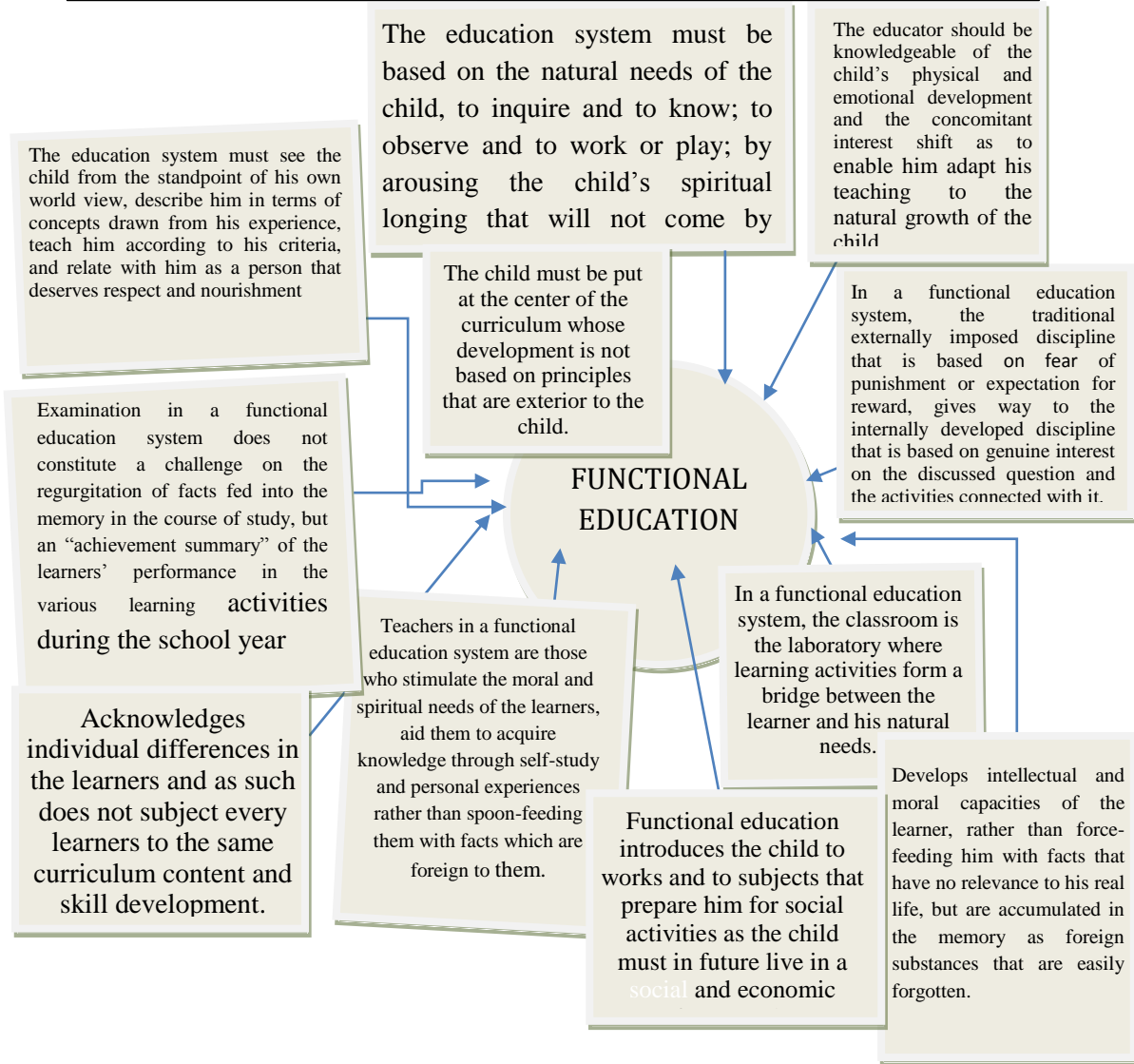
Worthy of note is the fact that functional education includes training, not only in basic skills and special abilities, but also in the right use of them (Azubuike, 2012). This implies that education becomes functional only when the learner is able to apply what he had learnt effectively and appropriately. In other words, Good cited in Adagba and Asaju (2014) maintains that functional education is that type of education for which there is an anticipated application, which thus assumes that the learner has immediate meaning, transferable into action by his learning activities. Functional education inculcates values that are essential for harmonious co-existence as individuals and as nations (Ogbuji, 2013). Furthermore, it focuses on trainings in personal and social values needed in the society for practical solutions to everyday problems. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria, during the launching of the Universal Basic Education Programme in Sokoto on 30th September, 1999, succinctly defines functional education in the following words:

Education is not just a matter of acquiring skills. Education is better understood when we see it also as a means of instilling, especially in our young ones; the importance of a number of fundamental values; such as devotion to the well-being of our motherland; respect for the constitution and the importance of democratic governance; a sense of the dignity of labour and moral uprightness; as well as respect for the rights of other citizens (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2000).

Suffice it to say that many African citizens have lost the feeling of trust and love for their nations. However, functional education, a holistic educational experience, is capable of integrating young Africans into the society with relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for meaningful co-existence, sustainability and developments (Adewale, 2014). Therefore, functional education when properly implemented is capable of producing Africans who can manufacture raw materials, machines, and tools needed for local and international markets, invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing diseases hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to a manufacturing status (Udoh&Akpan, 2014).

Sustainable Functional Education

Sustainable is a degree of continued level of activity or pace without harming its efficiency and the people affected by it. In other words, it means keeping a steady level. A process of making something to continue for a long time without becoming less. The art of making something like functional education to exist and endure. Sustainable functional education therefore, is that education that focuses on all-round development of the individual; stands the test of time, is continuous/ lifelong, and focuses on the present and future needs of the child and the society. Sustainable functional education possesses the following principles in figure 1 below:



Zeilberger(2019)Ferriere, 1951; Dewey, 1960 & Okafor, 1988.

The above principles of functional education is made relevant by the teacher in the classroom. That the teacher is the hub of education and determines its quality, is never in doubt. All these boil down to the quality of the teacher that implements the education policy statements and curriculum. Ipso facto, the teacher is the principal executive of any functional curriculum. This is because it is the implementation of the curriculum by the teacher that gives educational curriculum its essence. No wonder Adagba and Asaju (2014) opined that educational system of any nation determines its type, nature, and caliber of manpower to be supplied. As a matter of fact, a lot has changed in this 21st century and new skills are required to be relevant so that most students would graduate with the relevant skills. To ensure sustainable functional

education based on the above principles, effective and functional teacher education becomes imperative and a task before all nations of Africa if they would live and survive. It is only when a teacher is well prepared for his job through effective teacher education programme that he can optimally deliver. It is not debatable therefore that there is need to overhaul the teacher education systems and sectors in all countries in order to produce a total teacher with the requisite skills, knowledge, and value relevant to the 21st century, if functional education should be sustained in Africa. In fact, no teacher can offer what he does not have.

Teacher Education

This is a kind of education that is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for production of teachers as a result of professional training. The saying that no educational system can rise above the quality of teachers is rather apt at this moment. It has been realized that development of well-educated and professionally trained teachers is an important aspect of healthy educational development (Asadua, 2021). If education is not achieving the desired goals, it may be reflecting the type of its teachers and the type of teacher education they received. In this regard teacher education refers to the professional education of teachers towards attaining attitude, knowledge, and skills for productivity and in line with societal demands/needs (Ubogu, 2020). Any nation that wants vibrant economy and productive citizens must put in place a comprehensive teacher education system that is adequately managed, funded, supported, supervised and motivated. Consequent upon that, teachers would be well-equipped and motivated to effectively discharge their duties in order to sustain functional education by the way they teach the young ones. Therefore, teacher education reaches out to the would-be teachers by providing them with the relevant knowledge, attitude and skills with which to function effectively, when absorbed in the teaching profession. It serves to equip would-be teachers with the conceptual and theoretical framework within which they can understand the intricacies of the profession. Also, it is a process of nurturing prospective teachers and updating qualified teachers' knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development. Teacher education therefore, is a process of whereby the prospective teacher, would-be teacher, or intending teacher is provided opportunity to develop cognitive perspective, affective dispositions and psycho-motor competencies, which endows him or her with the qualities, capacities and capabilities for teaching (Ipaye in Ofojebe, 2006).

One can infer from the above definition that functionality of education and its sustainability depend on the quality, quantity, and commitment of the teacher that develops it in the learners. Although the validity of any education system is gauged by the relevance of her curriculum (Dike & Eze in Nwaka, 2009), without competent teachers, nothing can be achieved even in the face of the most evolutionary and well intentional educational policies and programmes. Education is, in fact, determined by the quality of its implementation process, which in essence requires effective education of teachers that would impart the skills appropriately to the students in the schools. Of all factors that can enable sustainable functional education, the teacher, undoubtedly, is the most important. This is why poor teacher preparation is pinpointed as the cause of the abysmal situation of education in Africa today (Akpu, 2019 & Aremu, 2019).

Unfortunately, teacher education in Africa is being challenged by myriads of problems, which negatively impact on teacher education and functionality in Africa. The problems, without excluding others, are inadequate funding, insufficient facilities and infrastructure, inadequate and non-functional ICT facilities, students' low entry requirement, poor mode of admission, insecurity of lives, poor work conditions/environment, and corrupt practices, incompetent and non-committed teaching personnel. Meanwhile, ethics of teacher education is lost. It may not be any wonder that many teacher education institutions have been criticized for the poor quality of instruction and training provided for the would-be teachers. The training methods and approaches seem outdated and do not take into consideration the changes taking place in both the school environment in which trained teachers are likely to teach and the requirements of a more technological global environment. In many of these teacher education institutions, instruction is mostly theoretical rather than practical. The problem, however, arises due to the craze for certificates as majority of students just want to be professional teachers.

Also, there are teaching needs for teachers in faculties/colleges of education. The development of their capacity for implementation and sustainability of functional education system is critical. Poor quality of teachers charged with the duty of training the teacher is a huge problem. There is an urgent need for capacity building of lecturers charged with the responsibility of teaching and managing different aspects of teacher education institutions. Improved teacher training programmes, planning, supervision, and monitoring mechanisms for the system is a factor that impacts positively on the success of teacher education. Also, there is an urgent need to develop research capacity for teacher trainers in faculties/colleges of education. Experience has shown that building more schools, pouring more money into the school system, deploying adequate number of teachers in schools alone nor availability of other human and materials resources cannot do the magic of sustaining functional education. It is, rather the extent of teacher education the teachers receive during training.

The Role of Teacher Education for Sustainable Functional Education in Africa

Eminent scholars, the focus now is on making functional education sustainable so that graduates would not be stagnant or stay at home and eat from their mothers' pot instead of being useful to themselves and the society. It then means that the role of teacher education and professional development of in-service teachers are more important. This places teacher education in the forefront of the sustainability process, which needed not just any kind of teacher education, but an enduring inclusive and quality teacher education. For sustainable functional education, Africa should invest in its teachers now. Teacher education system must be put in proper perspective to enable it play its expected significant roles for sustaining functional education in Africa. There is then the need to make teacher education programmes more qualitative and functional.

To achieve these, teacher education must be made relevant and meaningful. That is to say, it must be relevant to the changing needs of the society. UNESCO in 2008 opined that investing in quality teacher education is a vital tool for achieving functional society, which allows every pre-service-teachers to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitude, and qualities important to shape a sustainable future (Ubogu, 2020). For teacher education to be considered functional, its graduates or trained teachers should be

knowledgeable and mature in motivating the learners to learn, employable and effective in relevant human endeavours. Teachers in a functional education system are those who stimulate the moral and spiritual needs of the learners, aid them to acquire knowledge through self-study and personal experiences rather than spoon-feeding them with facts which are foreign to them. The main quality of such teachers is enthusiasm rather than scholarship and the understanding of the child and his needs rather than following a rigid curriculum (Zeilberger, 2019; Ferriere, 1951; Dewey, 1960 & Okafor, 1988).

Hopefully, for the past seven years now, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been making frantic effort to enhance teacher education in sub-Saharan Africa and are targeting national key teacher education/training institutions as the beneficiary institutions. This effort was to provide quality teacher education and training by:

1. Strengthening existing pre-service programmes, particularly through Information and Communication Technology - supported blended training programmes and successful ICT supported innovations;
2. Enhancing the capacity of teacher trainers with ICT competencies to improve the quality of teaching and learning; and
3. Improving networks of teacher education/training institutions for promoting knowledge sharing on effective strategies and teaching practices (UNESCO, 2020).

Presently, ten African countries – Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Togo and Zambia have benefited with additional funding from Chinese government. The Open University (TOU) Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) (2020) are also playing their part in making teacher education relevant. TESSA suggests that teacher educators should practice active teaching and learning; develop more learner-centered approaches to teaching. Explicitly it was pointed out that diversified curriculum and various programmes of teacher education (literacy programmes, vocational education, science education, teacher training and special education), succeed to equip the would-be teachers continuously with a broad array of relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, beliefs and values needed to bring about particular changes in the learners' behaviours. These changes however, are expected to become enduring part of the learners' lives making them literate, self-confident, self-reliant and useful/relevant personalities in whatever they choose to do, if well implemented in schools by the teacher. The below table explains it more.

Table 1: Teachers' Knowledge/Skills/Competences/Values that can help to Sustain Functional Education Knowledge/Skill/ Competencies/Values Expected Change

Functional Literacy Ability to decipher meaning and express ideas in a range of media; this include the use of images; graphics, videos, charts, graphs of visual literacy.

Self-reliant: Demonstrate self-reliant potentials and function effectively with little or no supervision and so be valuable to the society.

Scientific Literacy: Understanding both the theoretical and applied aspects of science and mathematics.

Technological Literacy: Competence in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT Compliant and Compatible)

Information Literacy: Ability to find, evaluate and make appropriate use of information, including the use of ICT for understanding information.

Cultural Literacy: Appreciation of the diversities of culture.

Global Awareness: Understanding of how nations and communities all over the world are interrelated.

Adaptability: Ability to adapt and manage in a complex independent world.

Inventive Thinking: Ability to produce and innovate (researches, discoveries, inventions).

Curiosity: Desire to know.

Creativity: Ability to use imagination to create new things.

Risk Taking: Ability to take risks.

High Order Thinking: Creative problem-solving and logical thinking that result in sound judgment.

Effective Communication: Ability to effectively communicate with others in the society.

Teaming: Ability to work in a team.

Collaboration and Interpersonal skill: Ability to interact and work effectively with others.

Personal and Social Reasonability: Ability to share responsibility for the common good of the society.

High Productivity: Ability to prioritize, plan and manage problems and projects to achieve the desired result.

Transfer of Knowledge: Ability to apply what they learnt in the classroom to real life situations/contexts to create relevant high quality products.

Sound Moral Behaviour: Exhibit sound and commendable moral behaviour that cannot be questionable by the larger society.

Source: Personal Experience, Agbaje in Nwogbo (2017), Nwaka & Orji (2017).

When the trained teacher is armed with the above listed broad array of relevant knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, beliefs and values acquired during training,

all things being, equal functional education would be sustained in Africa. It is already known that in any nation, where its teachers are properly educated/trained and equipped with the requisite educational material resources and facilities; her students would be impacted with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to function and engage in productive ventures; earn a beautiful living and contribute to economic and national development.

Conclusion/ Suggestions for the way forward to Sustainable Functional Education

Based on the foregoing, functional teacher education implies a functional education system, and consequently a functioning society, where the needs of the individual and the society are met. Diseased education system entails a diseased society. Qualitative teacher education breeds genuine and integral development. There is no doubt that as the teacher is; so is the taught and no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The following suggestions therefore, become relevant:

1. Governments of African nations should invest in quality teacher education which is crucial for achieving functional education. To this end, teacher training institutions need a total overhaul in skill orientation through adequate curriculum design, staff recruitment and students' in take in the envisaged areas of knowledge, skills and values to be acquired.
2. The selection process into teachers' education programmes should be overhauled. Would-be teachers should be selected mostly through other procedures of screening like interviews which would help to determine interests, attitudes, and aptitude of the applicant.
3. Practical teaching practice and supervision of the would-be teacher should be taken seriously for them to practically demonstrate their acquisition and mastery of desirable knowledge, skills and values relevant to sustaining functional education; ensuring that they effect the necessary corrections they were given during the training exercise. This should also be followed-up with a repeat visit.
4. Maintenance of minimum standard in educational institutions should be ensured by appropriate agencies charged with the responsibilities through periodic accreditation and supervision.
5. There should be adequate funding, provision of adequate human and infrastructural facilities, laboratories, studios, workshops and libraries and suitable environment in teacher education institutions to ensure attainment of set objectives.
6. Those in charge of teacher education programmes should support the development of pedagogical content knowledge, application of new knowledge in practice, a professional attitude and self-directed learning strategies such as reflective and inquiry learning.

7. African governments should henceforth ensure that the objectives of our teacher education system is geared towards producing a total teacher with requisite skills, knowledge and values relevant to the 21st century and beyond.

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