

# TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NIGERIA – CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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## **Abstract**

*Education is universally viewed as the vehicle that is capable of improving and exporting transformational behavior, growth and sustainability of a nations wealth. It is a channel to articulate new ideas, thoughts and futuristic aspirations of an individual and the nation at large. Just as the saying goes, no nation can rise above the level of its teachers”. It is obvious that teacher education programme should be structured to be compatible with the current pedagogical realities so that education could facilitate the needed growth and sustainability of the nations wealth. In view of this, this paper examined the historical development of teacher education in Nigeria with it's challenges. It also X-rayed the 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning process as well as the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education model of the National institute of education, Singapore was examined. The paper recommends amongst others that the Nigeria society should have a proactive paradigm shift from what is observed in teacher education today to the 21<sup>st</sup> century education demands – compliant teacher education and adequate budgetary provision for education. It also recommends that the stakeholders should do the needful so as to avert giving lazy teachers in the teaching profession the justification for their inadequacies.*

**Keywords:** Challenge, Teacher education, learning process, education, information and communication technology.

## **Introduction**

Education is a bridge to the future, an agent for human capital formation, an industry that produces the skills and knowledge required for national development. In fact, a nations ability to develop the skills, knowledge and competencies of its citizens is linked to the education system – a social service with positive externalities that foster economic, social, political and technological and technological changes (Okeke, 2004).

However, to achieve the desired national development, quality education and teacher education must be repositioned to address some critical challenges, otherwise the exercise would be in futility. Since no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers as recognized by the national policy on Education (FRN, 2004), the teacher becomes the hut on which the education system rotated. This implies that teacher education is a fundamental

form of education that should be functional and solid in all ramifications so as to meet the present challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Nigeria.

There is a high increase in the demand for education at all levels in Nigeria due to the increased awareness of its importance, increased population and the need for critical skills for survival in the society. Therefore, there is the need for more qualified teachers to cope with the high growing population of students in the school system. In fact, the roles teachers play in the society are enormous and significant to the extent that if their training is not given adequate considerations, the society is bound to collapse. Aside from playing prominent roles in the school and community, teachers also contribute significantly to nation building, curriculum planning and implementation, policy formulation, conflict resolution and the electoral process. Therefore, the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its attending challenges and prospects, becomes a justifiable yardstick for measuring the relevance and efficiency of teachers' roles in contemporary society.

Teacher education is a professional education of teacher which is geared towards the attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in accordance with the needs of the society (Osuji, 2009). Teacher education is the preparation and training ground for pre-service and in-service knowledge given to both the would-be and serving teachers. It is a professional knowledge and skill gotten from a professional and specialized institution for the purpose of providing transformative, critical thinking, independent learning skills to others. In view of this, the nation needs to look inwards to ascertain if the output of teacher education programme are actually meeting up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogical demands. Therefore, this paper will access teacher education programme in Nigeria, the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education – challenges and the way forward.

### **Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher Education in Nigeria is traceable to the advent of the Christian missionaries (Oyeleke, Akinleye and Opeleye, 2013). The urgent need for evangelizers saw the engagement of untrained and unskilled teachers, notwithstanding that they met the demand for which they were engaged. This level of teachers dominated the teaching profession until the coming of Ashby Commission report of investment in Higher Education in 1960. The report which was set up for post-school certificate and higher education brought about the establishment of advanced teacher training colleges (now college of education) as from 1962 to produce well-qualified non-graduate teachers to teach lower classes in secondary schools (Osuji, 2009). Equally, universities

started offering degree programmes in education for post graduate teachers till date.

Again, in order to systematize teacher education to meet the societal needs, the Federal Government of Nigeria formulated the following objectives on teacher Education:

- i. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teacher for all levels of the education system.
- ii. To further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers
- iii. To help teachers fit into social life of community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals
- iv. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations
- v. To enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession (NPE, 2013).

As a result of the above goals, Nigeria as a society, traditionally as expected has set high and stringent ideals for teachers to follow. According to Jokthan (2012), teachers are expected to be prospectors, inspirers, critics and appreciators of excellence and enemies of shoddiness. They must be above reproach, dedicated, zealous and self controlled. They should be capable of positively influencing the students in their thoughts, behaviours and lifestyle. It is also expected that one who has acquired teacher education should have knowledge of his/her subject area, exhibit prowess in instructional delivery as well as in other school and community related issues.

Surprisingly, these expectations are defiled when one tends to establish a relationship between the output of teacher education programme and its national objectives. Teacher education programme has been deficient in providing teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment in the society. According to Adeosun (2014), teacher training institutions have been criticized for their inability to produce teachers who are properly grounded in pedagogy and content as well as having the ability to collaborate professionally in a working environment. In fact, transition from academic theories in universities to classroom practice has often been very sharp, suggesting that student teachers are not often properly groomed to put into practice current pedagogy and interactive skills that have been theoretically learnt in the classroom.

### **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teaching and Learning**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century Nigeria has been characterized by knowledge driven economics, rapid information exchange and fast moving communication technology. Again, there are a lot of challenges facing our communities, along

with instant connectivity to a global society; a civic literacy could not be relevant or applicable to the curricular in our society. In a country like Nigeria, apart from global warming, endemic diseases, financial meltdown, terrorism, kidnapping, killing, agitation for sovereignty, corruption, electoral malpractices and other emerging tribal conflicts are just a few of the issues today's students will be called upon to address (Ijiri, 2011).

In the light of the above exigencies, education must focus on nurturing the learner/child morally, intellectually, physically, socially and aesthetically to face these challenges inherent in today's Nigerian society. Students need to acquire new knowledge, skills and dispositions to ensure their survival and success. The 21<sup>st</sup> century learners must possess self-direction and an ability to collaborate with individuals and machines (Boholane, 2017). If today's students want to compete in the global society, they must also be proficient communicators.

The partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills 2008 as cited in Adeosun (2014) identified the following skills to be acquired by 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.

- ❖ A blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacy.
- ❖ Critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, flexibility, effective communication and collaboration, self-direction as a base for more academic knowledge;
- ❖ Skills needed to make the best use of rapid changing technologies and vital to working and living in an increasingly complex, rapidly changing global society.

On the whole, the 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogy should give credence to produce individuals that would possess skills in communication, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration. Learning content should be loaded with knowledge and skills relevant to the inherent challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teaching and learning activities should be problem-solving based as well as teachers' pedagogical approaches. In fact, learners should be exposed to learning experiences that will be relevant to the realities of the looming societal challenges (Alachi, 2011). Classroom instruction and learning packages should be driven by the fast-moving communication technologies.

### **Challenges of teacher education in Nigeria**

Teacher education in Nigeria has not been smooth and this justifies the discrepancies between the desired objectives and the output of the programme. Teacher education in Nigeria is faced with many challenges among these are:

1. There is no congruity between teacher education curriculum and the new age teaching and learning environment. The new age is characterized with constructivist learning, learner-centered instructions and integrating technology into pedagogical process. The teacher education curriculum has not

been reviewed in line with the new global age (Ezeahi, 2004). In fact, a gap exist between the curriculum taught to teacher trainees and the actual teaching experience and the environment they are exposed to in the schools.

2. There is low quality and quantity of input in teacher training programme. For instance, the only course in NCE curriculum which is primary education studies explicitly set out to prepare students for teaching in the primary school has always gained low enrolment, leaving primary schools with dearth of teachers. Also, there is low enrolment in faculties of education of universities in Nigeria and most of the students are those that could not measure up in other faculties (Onwumere, 2004).

3. There is lack of professional development opportunities for teachers. The supposed professional teacher education placed emphasis on content delivery, examination and certification at the expense of creativity, innovation and research which are the indices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century lifelong learning.

4. The varying levels of qualifications characterizing teaching profession in Nigeria makes it heterogenous unlike other professions like law and medicine who have equivalent level of education and training. For instance, we have the NCE and the BA Ed teachers. Even private school teaching force are predominated by unqualified and pre-service teachers (Offor, 2013).

5. Teacher education in Nigeria has received afternoon beating and poor funding. This is manifested in the decline in yearly budgetary provisions for education. It is pathetic to note that poor funding of education is a stumbling block in meeting institutional requirements for training of teachers. In the same vein, Gbadamosi (2006) supports this view by noting that one major challenges of teacher education programme implementation is inadequate funding.

6. There is the level of ICT application in most teacher education institutions in Nigeria. In most cases (computer science, Business education) students group themselves to make use of the available computers and other technological apparatus, hence they are not sufficient. Nigerian teacher education is lacking in the area of application of ICT (Gbadamosi, 2006).

In a more succinctway, Okoli, Ogbonda and Ekpefa-Abdullahi (2015) opined that the contemporary Nigerian teacher education are inhibited by problem of quality assurance, insufficient funding, lack of personnel, poor facility utilization, faulty selection process and poor teacher education curriculum.

## **21<sup>st</sup> Century Teacher Education**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching involves a balance of objectives of a teacher with the needs and inputs of the students (Boholano, 2017). In fact, the quality of the teaching force determines the quality of education. Therefore, as the standards for the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner/child are raised, the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher

will also need the right values, skills and knowledge to be effective practitioners who will bring about the desired outcomes of education.

To articulate what is expected of an ideal 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher, the National Institute of Education Singapore (Programme Review and Enhancement 2008-2009) designed a model for teacher education. This model put forward six broad recommendations that are intended to enhance the key elements of teacher education, including the underpinning philosophy, curriculum, desired outcome from our teachers and academic pathways. The recommendations include;

➤ A professional teacher should put learners at the centre of his/her teaching assignment. This implies that considerations should be given to learners' development, differences, emotional status and abilities when planning and delivering instructions (Nnokam, 2011).

Teachers are expected to have high standards and strong drive to learn in order to keep abreast with incessant changes in the educational milieu so that they could possess the appropriate skills and knowledge to cope with the 21<sup>st</sup> century students needs. Also, teachers are expected to be committed to their profession through active collaborations and should strive to become better practitioners to benefit the teaching community.

➤ **The Graduand Teacher Competencies:** This centres on the professional practices – the leadership and management of these graduands as well as their personal effectiveness. According to Denga (2011) the graduands of teacher education are expected to carry out certain professional activities in relation to learners education, manage these activities with their affiliations and equally maintain their personalities as professionals. There should also be regulatory partnership between the practicing teachers and the stakeholders in education such as the ministry of education

➤ There should be balance between theoretical knowledge and practice based learning as the gap is inimical to teacher education programme. The common approach to bridge this gaps are reflection, experiential learning, school based research or inquiry projects and pedagogical tools that bring the classroom into the university (Okeke, 2004).

➤ Acknowledging the dynamism in teacher education programmes and the antecedent needed to update the content. This implies that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is need to put in place a mechanism for greater sharing of ideas and articulation. Recognition in the changing nature of content should be increased in terms of accessibility, advancement and conditions for bringing about new learning. Also pedagogies and assessment need to change given the changing nature of knowledge, learning, profile of learners and new environment (Schleischer, 2015).

- The model captures the establishment of assessment framework for teaching and learning to address the need for producing teachers who have assessment literacies and who are able to adopt the best practice in classroom to effectively evaluate students outcomes.
- The model embraced the need to attract the best and highest ways to make teaching a profession of choice. A staged approach is proposed for implementation of a 2-year full time PGDE – master programme and a 4+1 year accelerated Bachelor-master programme for the top 10% of the cohort (FRN, 2004). This approach is proposed to determine and establish the basis for certifying professional teachers.

### **The way forward**

Teacher education programmes are expected to produce professionals endowed with values, knowledge and skills that reflect today's society, to enable them reproduce critical thinkers, problem solvers, creators and collaborators that will measure up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands (Gbadamosi, 2006). Education should not only be a mere reflection of social and economic forces at work in the society, it should also be a means of shaping the socio-economic and cultural forces of a nation and determining the direction of their growth. In the same vein, teacher education curriculum in Nigeria should not only reflect the contemporary challenges in the Nigerian society, it should be structured to shape these challenges, taking cognizance of their resultant exigencies and determining direction of growth.

Iwuamadi and Anyanwu (2016) suggested the following as the best practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education in Nigeria:

- ✓ Teacher education curriculum should have local and community relevance to offer pre-service and in-service teachers the opportunities to localize teaching and learning.
- ✓ Teacher education curriculum should focus on contextualized multiple intelligence and learning ability, students learning and development and schools development (Babalola, 2011). This will offer teachers ample opportunities for individualized, localized and globalized teaching and learning.
- ✓ The curriculum should be flexible and adaptable in terms of learning targets, contents, methods and schedules to meet the developmental needs of individual teachers.
- ✓ Teacher education curriculum should have global relevance and exposure. This centres on world class materials and related to technological, economical, political, cultural and learning globalization (Shoja, 2012).
- ✓ Pedagogical practices should embrace the use of information communication technology, facilitate Teachers lifelong learning, offer teachers

multiple sources of learning, encourage a local and global network of learning and should equally be enhanced with world-wide. Information Technological pedagogical environment and other meaningful learning infrastructures.

Again, Jokthan (2012), made the following contributions as the 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher education in Nigeria;

- Teacher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should provide opportunities for teachers to have appropriate knowledge and skills to meet the new needs of school and society in the aspect of increasing globalization and the use of information communication technologies (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2015).
- Teacher education should aim at training teachers to be reflective in practice, creative and partnership building.
- Newly recruited teachers should undergo a systematic induction training programme to make adequate provision for professional development as teachers.
- At tertiary education, those who train teachers or take up teaching as career in tertiary institutions should be subjected to evaluation by students in both contents and personality.
- Teacher education curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure that it supports the development of the above.

In addition, the evaluation of the personnel should include the evaluation of methodologies, in fact, lecturers who train teachers should discard lecture method and put into practice those pedagogical practices they are transferring as knowledge and skills to trainee teacher (Sahlberge, 2012).

Again, the government of the day should provide the enabling environment for teacher education programme to succeed. This requires adequate budgetary allocation to education.

## **Conclusion**

The effectiveness and quality of an educational system is a function of the effectiveness and quality of production of teachers for the system, since the quality of any system of education can never rise above the quality of its teachers.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century era, is an opportunity Nigeria should take advantage of to restructure her educational system in general and teacher education in particular. Placing side by side Nigerian policy statements on teacher education and today teacher education in Nigeria, it is clear that the gap would add to the challenges of our time. The nature of teacher education in Nigeria with its attendant worries and the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands require a proactive restructuring of the programme. Teacher education programme should be given the needed professional attention in terms of policy implementation in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning requirements. The stakeholders

in education is a determinant to a knowledge based society and they should do the needful in order to avert giving lazy teachers and the lip-servers of the teaching profession the justification for their inadequacies.

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