

# REPOSITIONING TEACHER EDUCATION AS A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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*Odagboyi Isaiah Amedu, PhD*  
*Department of Primary Education,*  
*College of Education,*  
*Akwanga.*

## **Abstract**

*The education process, is geared towards the upliftment of the welfare of human beings. However, it is not possible to help yourself beyond what you know. This is where the teacher comes in. Human beings can become anything in life when they experience the teaching service. It follows therefore that, the height any nation can ever attain is reciprocal to the quality of her teachers. Attention to teacher education is important to national well being. This paper, examines the state of our teacher education; ranging from the structure of training institutions, curriculum, admission, to the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria. What must be done in order to rescue the already bad situation before the nation plunges deeper into calamity. This calls for prompt attention from all tiers of government, curriculum planners and all stake holders to rescue the teaching service from eminent disaster.*

**Key words:** Teacher education, teaching service, training institutions.

Teaching is a critical part of a successful educational system. However, good teaching does not happen accidentally. The knowledge of the learning process, child development and academic content are all important components of good teaching (Roth and Swail, 2000). The teaching service exposes the individual from one stage to another in his/her journey up the ladder of becoming a useful, well equipped member of the society. He/she passes through the hands of many teachers from one stage to the other. One teacher does his/her part, and hands over to the next. Since learning is cumulative, it will spell disaster for a young person, if he/she is mismanaged especially at the early stages, or at any stage. Such a deficiency may leave a permanent deformity in the learning process of that individual. It is therefore not a thing of joy, to have one teacher who is not properly fit for the job, in the teaching force of any country. Damages occurring from that one teacher may affect many pupils/students negatively.

The practice of teaching has changed over time. A time there was, when teachers were considered as experts, full of knowledge, and positioned to pour out same into ignorant students. In recent times, this practice has changed and the emphasis is to put the learner in the center of learning activities. There is a need therefore, to produce a generation of teachers whose purpose is to develop learners rather than teaching them, who can help learners to become independent, who provide students with motivation and interest for life- long learning (Szucs, 2009). Preparing teachers today in an increasingly networked technology- rich world, requires a critical examination. Technology has great power to advance the ways in which educators think about learning environment for youths (Clifford, Frieson and Lock, nd). This was corroborated by Palmer,(2015) who stated that there is an effect that technology has brought on the way we communicate, collaborate and learn. The 21<sup>st</sup> century teacher that will be effective in the discharge of his/her duties must be able to incorporate these tools into his/her teaching.

Leading students from the world of darkness and bringing them to light of knowledge is the reason for educational institutions. Education is not just one of those things that exist among humans, but a basic human need that must be met if what we expect is quality human resources. Various aspects that relate to the provision of education must work together, so they may be able to produce something useful for the community (Pongoh, 2014). To Pongoh, (2014) a teacher is considered as the most important factor in education that determines the success of learners and the educational process in general. The reason is simple. It is the teacher that translates all the lofty objectives enshrined in the curriculum to reality at any stage of the educational system. The security of the future of a nation can be pursued through investments in the preparation of teachers. If the cry for transformation in Nigeria is going to have any level of success, the way to look is not first and foremost the provision of infrastructure that are put in place by foreign nationals. The only reason these foreign nationals are called upon to do complex projects in relevant sectors of our economy is because they were adequately exposed to functional educational systems. If Nigeria will put more emphasis on providing good education for her citizenry, we would be on the right pathway to true national transformation.

Teachers are the largest, most important input of an education system (Fasiku, 2011).The ability of a teacher to organize classrooms, manage behavior of students and use instructional materials effectively in teaching is critical to achieving positive educational out comes.

According to Okafor, (2004) science teacher preparation is that form of preparation which is properly planned and experimentally tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who will teach or teach particularly but not exclusively in primary and post-primary levels of schooling. In its expected dimension, it encompasses, the preparation of administrators, supervisors and guidance connsellors within the same frame of reference.

### **Teacher Education**

In the National Policy of Education, (2013) it is stated that ‘in recognition of the pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels, teacher education shall continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development. The minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession shall be the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE)’. There is no doubt that the extent, to which students can gain from the school system, is dependent on the competence, sensitivity, and the motivation of the teacher. Teacher education is defined therefore as a programme of training of persons that would be competent to impart knowledge on learners, from pre-primary to tertiary levels of education. Ogbole, (2001) looks at teacher education as an endless process which begins from the day the student teacher is admitted into college for training right through the period of career service as a teacher, to non-formal processes as induction and in-service courses organized to keep him abreast with new trends.

Teacher education includes pedagogical theory, teaching skills and professional skills. Pedagogical theory is specific to particular levels of education, in order to equip the teacher with the philosophical, sociological and psychological basis that will enable him/her to function effectively at that level. The quality of the citizenry of any society is the direct effect of the educational system. The success of the educational system is strongly determined by the quality of teachers that implement the curriculum. However, there must be a well planned and managed teacher education program. What is called the developed world could simply be a result of the educational system in such countries. For instance in Germany, teacher education is in two stages. The first stage is training at a university, while the second stage involves two year practical training at a teacher seminar and selected training schools. In the United States of America (USA), licensure requirements according to Roth et al. (2000) are;

1. Possession of at least a bachelor degree
2. Completion of an approved accredited education program
3. Have a major or minor in education (for elementary education)
4. Have a major in the subject area in which they plan to teach (for middle or high school teaching) and
5. Pass a state test.

In Japan, such meticulous conditions are also put in place to ensure that only approved personnel are allowed to teach. (Iwata, 2004).

### **Scope and objectives of teacher education.**

The quality of a nation depends on the quality of the citizens. The quality of the citizens depends not exclusively but in critical measure upon the quality of their education. The quality of their education depends more than any single factor, on the quality of their teacher. Since the training of teachers has been clearly seen as a critical

measure that must be put in place if the society would be sustained, it calls for a clearly stated scope of operations. Questions that should be asked include:

- (a) How long does it take to adequately prepare a teacher and fit him to operate effectively in a given level of education?
- (b) To what extent shall students be exposed to the subject matter for any given level?
- (c) How should the students be tailored towards total commitment to their profession?
- (d) How can motivation be sustained?
- (e) How will teacher education infuse into the would-be teachers, the concept of continuous learning?

The national policy on education, (2013) is clear on the issue of teacher education. It states that,

Teacher education will continue to be given a major emphasis in all our educational planning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teacher.

The purpose of our teacher education should be:

- (a) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for levels of our education system;
- (b) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- (c) To help teachers fit into the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives;
- (d) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of the country but in the wide world;
- (e) to enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

The curricula for the various levels of teacher education were fashioned to meet these needs. For instance, according to Lere (2001), the curriculum of teachers' colleges then was structured in the following components.

1. General studies (Basic academic subjects).
2. Foundation student (principles and practice of education);
3. Studies related to students intended fields of teaching (various subjects areas) and
4. Teaching practice.

Other levels beyond teachers' colleges, their curricula were expanded to take cognizance of new developments in the areas of vocational technical and otherwise.

It was realised that no matter the efficiency of pre-service training given to teachers, there would be still be areas of inadequacies. In that respect, in-service training shall be an integral part of continuing teacher education (NPE 2013). The National Policy also stipulated that only professionally qualified and registered teachers shall be allowed to practice at all levels, and newly qualified staff shall serve a period of one year internship.

### **Student's admission to teacher education.**

The teaching service, being the bedrock of national development, will require the best available hands that must be obtained from within and beyond the shores of our country. However, Balogun (2001) noted, certain courses like medicine, pharmacy and law are given meticulous training in the universities. Their entry requirements are stringent, and the curricula are followed to the letter. Not so for education. He further pointed out that the requirements for gaining admission to read education courses are rather loose. What the faculty of education gets eventually as students to be trained as teachers are the 'dregs' among our schools leavers, or the 'refuse' of other callings. According to Ogar and Aniefiok (2012), generally, it seems that a good number of candidates going into teacher training programmes these days would probably not been there if they had an alternative. This leaves the faculties of education with the 'rejects' of other faculties to begin with. Ogbole, (2001) citing Mann (1830s) said, "As long as teachers are recruited from the refuse of other callings, there is no hope of improving their efficiency and their self respect.

It is observable that professional courses in the universities take a comparatively long time to train their students, it is a deferent thing in education. Take for instance. Primary leavers in the days of Universal Primary Education (UPE) could be trained for six weeks and thereafter, given appointment to teach. Education courses are run as distant learning, sandwich and the like. This care free treatment given teacher education does not translate into productivity after training.

Many students who train on teachers only endure the training and find their way out of the profession at the slightest opportunity. Francis, Benard and Benedict, (2014) lamented that teachers training institutions in the country (Ghana) produce so many teachers every year but there is still shortage of teachers because they are not retained in the profession.

### **Challenges of teachers Education in Nigeria.**

#### **1. Government policies.**

If we recognized that education is the bedrock of every form of development, efforts must be made to ensure that best brains and hands, are recruited for training. If an engineer make a mistake in constructing a bridge, the bridge can be dismantled and another better one built. The mistake of an architect will cost only materials, But the mistake of a teacher involves lives both now, and generations to come. Looking through the national policy on teacher education, there are beautiful policy statements take; for instance 'newly qualified teachers shall serve a period of one year internship' (NPE 2013). This looks like what obtains in the developed world. Yet, in all sincerity, this has not been observed in any part of Nigeria. Government is yet to show any observable commitment to the development of teacher education. Many unqualified teachers still practice teaching at all levels of education in Nigeria.

#### **2. The teacher's status in a society.**

Balogun (2001:121) has this to say” Today, teaching has been so devalued that the level of disrespect it suffers make parents feel less willing to motivate their children along that line.” This disrespect is caused by a conglomeration of factors. Francis et. al. (2014) mentioned these factors and they include.

- I. Low salaries for teachers.
- II. Delay in payment of teachers salaries.
- III. Poor condition of service for teachers.
- IV. Lack of incentives in the teaching profession.
- V. Low prestige of the teaching profession.
- VI. Poor school and class room environment, among others.

There is no work until there are workers. For the teaching profession to become effective in Nigeria, concerted effort must be made to settle the teacher.

### **3. Regular and sincere accreditation programmes by monitory bodies.**

The National Commission for Colleges of Education, (NCCE) and the National Universities Commission (NUC) have the mandate of checking on the institutions to ensure that facilities are adequately put in place for the courses students pass through. The criteria that must be used for such accreditation exercises should be strict conformation to government policies. Many times, these institutions do not exhibit sincerity during accreditation exercises. Some facilities are put in place just to deceive NCCE officials. They disappear soon after the exercise is through.

### **4. Absence of a mechanism to maintain professional practices**

Some professions like nursing, have a regular practice of updating their knowledge, which is a yardstick for renewing their license, in this way, only competent and up to date nurses are allowed to practice. Though Nigerian government recognizes Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRRCN) as a body that issues certificates to professional teachers, it stops there. The TRCN has no mechanism put in place to continue to ensure that teachers are up to date with their professional practices. It is therefore, to be noted that the role of TRCN is not satisfactory in maintaining teacher quality.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations have been made.

1. Education is a costly venture, but the cost of ignorance is by far higher. The Government of Nigeria must show commitment to the development of a viable teacher education.
2. Policies that promote motivations must be put in place in order to attract, train and retain capable brains and hands in the teaching industry.
3. It is recognized that non governmental bodies participate in providing educational facilities. However government must show good examples in the conduct of her own institutions.

4. Education is an equipment to function well in the society. In this vein, there is a lot that can be done by educational providers (both government and non governmental bodies) to improve the social status of teachers in the society.
5. Recruitments of trainee teachers must not continue to be from the 'refuse' of other callings. If the teachers' status is enhanced, conditions of service improved, and school environment standardized, chances are that more capable potentials will take interest to train as teachers.
6. TRCN should expand its horizon to include processes of examining and renewing of licenses to teachers based on their competence in acceptable standards of educational practices.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the greatness of a nation is built on the quality of its educational system. This can be sustained only on a functional and steady production of teachers. No transformational programme can ever succeed no matter how well planned without the input of the teacher. It becomes then, a matter of urgency to re enforce a well tailored teacher education.

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