

# TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY; ISSUES AND INSIGHTS

*Evelyn Fabian Nwaugo (Mrs.)*

## **Abstract**

This paper examines teacher education in Nigeria. It defines education as a necessary and essential requirement for National Development, It also defines teacher education as the training arm of the teaching profession that is charged with the development of knowledge and skills as a basis for practice. The goals of teacher education as enshrined in the National Policy on Education was also analyzed. The paper enumerated some of the problems facing teacher education in Nigeria and as well suggested some innovations to be introduced into teacher education programme in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

Education is generally regarded as a necessary and essential requirement for national development. It is central to socio-economic and technological advancement and it is critical to the self sustaining and self generating process of positive transformation of modern society. Education is not just about literacy and numeracy. It is about value formation, value orientation and regeneration. Education is the cornerstone of any nation and has remained for sometime a big industry in Nigeria.

The state and future of any nation depends, to a large extent, on the quality of her education with particular reference to teacher education. Education is a tool for the integration of individual into the society so that he can achieve self-realization, develop national consciousness, promote unity and strive for social, economic, political, scientific, cultural and technological progress (Abu, 2001). Ajayi (1998) stated that "education unlocks the key to modernization, but the teacher holds the key to the door" the teacher is the co-ordinator of all the learning resources. He is the interpreter and transmitter of the nation's educational philosophy. Education produces individuals that can contribute positively to national development both economically and otherwise.

## Teacher Education

The term teacher education, according to Okafor (1988), can be defined as that form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) defines it as that process that helps to develop man" physically, morally, socially to enable him function in any society he finds himself. Alifa (2003) sees it as that aspect of education which affects the whole nation and the pivot on which the country's educational mechanism revolves. In a nutshell teacher education is the training arm of the teaching profession that is charged with the development of knowledge and skill as abases for practice. It prepares personnel for entry into the profession.

## The Goals of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The promulgation of the New National Policy in Education (2004), outlines the goals of teacher education which are the outcome of the national objectives as follows:

1. Producing a highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
2. Encouraging further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
3. Helping teacher to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
4. Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
5. Enhancing teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

What the above entails is that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professional trained. Teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties.

This shows that a teacher is the person who instructs to promote the teaching learning process. He is the one who is able to bring about intended learning process. He is the one who is able to bring about

intended learning outcomes. The policy also acknowledges the pivotal role of the teacher in education and the importance of quality teacher education.

As Adesina (1977) posited, "teachers constitute the single most important fabric upon which hangs the success of the whole educational edifice. This means that the teachers are the most important people in any institution of learning because no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Lassa (1994) noted on "the quality of research in enhancing teacher quality in Nigeria" and did not hesitate to state the quality of the teacher educators, and the up to date quality of the teacher education depend on their enforcement in reliable research endeavours. In the same vein, Ogbazi (1987) suggested providing occupational guidance right from the primary school so as to meet up the big demand for job awareness in the education system. Musaaazi (1986) asserted that:

Teacher training is given considerable attention and support from both the federal and state governments on the ground that without an adequately trained teaching personnel, Nigeria cannot afford to expand her educational facilities and consequently development programmes cannot be implemented as planned" (page 7).

Teacher education should be given the necessary support in order to move Nigeria forward and to produce a good citizenry for the nation.

### The Problems of Teacher Education in Nigeria

All educational effort is to produce teachers who would function effectively as members of the society, for social harmony and progress and also to produce competent personnel who can contribute immensely to the development of the nation but today schools are producing half baked teachers that will contribute to the running of our future generation because of this we have various problems associated with teacher education in Nigeria which are as follows:

1. The present system of funding teacher education in Nigeria is grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the programme. The poor funding brings a lot of negative consequences to the education system - especially with respect to teachers' welfare, instructional materials and infrastructure.
2. The education policies lack proper implementation, especially in the area of teacher education; lack of educational policy formulation can mar the educational system.
3. There are poor infrastructural amenities in the teacher educational institutions. There is also the problem of matching quantity with quality. In the various institutions there are lack of accommodation, electricity, classrooms and other teaching aids to facilitate learning
4. No proper supervisory units to supervise the teacher education institutions from time to time. Identifying the effective teacher is not a simple task, but evaluation of teachers assists in providing a review of what has been accomplished and what has to be done in future. Teacher evaluation is indispensable to the planning and operation of a good school.
5. The students in the institutions lack hostel accommodations and other necessary things that will facilitate learning.
6. The teaching profession is not professionalized. According to Okebukola(1995), standards should be enforced in the admission of candidates into teacher education programme. A situation where 'rejects' from other programmes are admitted for certificate and degree courses in education must not over beyond 1999 but unfortunately the situation still persists till today in our various institutions. So also are people that cannot get jobs elsewhere are dumped into the teaching profession as their last resort. If teaching is professionalized, there will be more dignity in the job.
7. Most teachers in the system are inadequately trained and ineffective.
8. There are lack of policy guidelines as obtained in the other facet of the educational enterprise. These and more problems are besieging teacher education programmes in Nigeria. For teacher education to move forward efforts should be made to dismantle these problems.

### **Issues and Insights into Teacher Education Programme in Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

A teacher is the person who instructs to promote teaching - learning process, he can also be regarded as a person who plays an important role in the conversion of raw materials (pupils or students) into finished product (that is graduates). An effective teacher is one who is able to bring about intended learning outcomes.

A teacher is expected to examine the cultural values of the society, its dynamics and changes occurring within the system to uphold the goodwill and ethics of the society and transmit such to the

students for societal upliftment or national development.

From the above discussion on whom a teacher is and what he is expected to do, teacher education should be given the attention it requires. The federal government of Nigeria usually set aside large sum of money for education. This was usually revealed in the annual budget of the country. Many years before military took over in Nigeria, education used to take the lion share of the national budget. This was done with the expectation that the educational sector would judiciously use these financial resources to train the needed manpower for all sectors of economy, teacher education inclusive. But today what we see is the reverse. Enough fund is not pumped into teacher education for it to be vibrant in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. Adequate fund should be provided and monitored for proper usage. There is need for a new orientation towards the purpose and process of teacher education and teaching. The curricula of teacher education should change with time and the needs of the nation within the global perspective for instance, a lot of emphasis is currently placed on science, technology and computer literacy: These areas of knowledge have to be included in the teacher training and retraining programmes.

The quality of teachers in schools and of new entrants must be high. Untrained teachers should disallowed in all schools. The head teachers and principals should be carefully chosen.

The social status of teachers needs special attention by all the governments of the federation because teachers are the real builders of tomorrow. The conditions of service, salaries and general welfare packages for teachers at all levels should be reviewed and upgraded. We cannot build a great tomorrow with inefficient and disgruntled elements. Teachers' daily workload should be reduced to enhance efficiency and higher performance. At the primary school level teachers should teach only a maximum of three subjects.

There should be active teachers' associations, which would promote the status of teachers and the teaching profession.

There should be regular workshops, seminars and conferences as well as sort in service programmes to update the knowledge, skills and competencies of the teacher for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Finally, the Global information super highway known as INTERNET is the in thin currently, / its benefits to teaching are too numerous and vital to ignore (such as access to information necessary to both students and teachers, development of systematic thinking, students working in team, availability of self training materials, environmental education and student centered curriculum). Concerned efforts must be made to incorporate this into the teacher education programmes at all levels as soon as possible.

Government should intensify effort to expand teacher education programmes that will cater for the requirements of vocational, technical and commercial education. The Federal Ministry of Education and Higher Education Institutions should work out series of new programmes or courses to enable teachers to upgrade their knowledge in this century. Teacher education must commit itself to the creation of a new social order that may fulfill the basic needs of our nation as well as our values.

The nation needs to keep abreast of modern technology. Therefore, the teacher should improve the curriculum to meet the needs of the nation and that of his students. The teacher of this century should get his course up-to-date and ensure the up keep of his professional standard. He should effect constructive changes as the coordinator of educational activities as well as project into the future to improve in the standard for national development.

Moral decadence is everywhere in our society the schools inclusive. The teacher should therefore see themselves as moral instructors to train students in the habits of piety and obedience to rules and regulations. Students should be taught to be courteous, obedient, punctual and loyal to their father land. For teacher education to be effective and efficient in this century the above trends should be followed and adhered to strictly because the teacher they say constitute the single most important fabric upon which hangs the success of the whole educational edifice.

## **Recommendations**

From the fore going discussion this paper recommends the following:

1. Funds should be made available to run teacher education outfits effectively and efficiently.
2. There should be proper implementation of (he educational policies because this can aid the educational system.
3. infrastructure should be provided for the schools and accommodation made available.
4. Teaching should be professionalized.

5. Teachers should be effectively trained for maximum productivity.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher education in Nigeria should be given much emphasis because for one to be a teacher, he/she must be dedicated, honest, humble, intelligent and be able to impart knowledge and ideas that will help the students to be good citizens of the country. The teacher should be bold and committed. For Nigeria to get the required teacher education programmes for the nation, all hands must be on deck. The 21<sup>st</sup> century will witness a lot of changes in teacher education for it is hoped that teachers will no longer be seen as second class citizens. They will be accorded equal opportunities with their counterparts in other professions. Teachers would no longer be backbenchers and cannot afford "to sit on the fence" because they are the builders of the nation.

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