

# THE ROLE OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN ECONOMIC REHABILITATION AND SELF RELIANCE

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## **Abstract**

Teachers across the entity known as Nigeria are of diversified experience, qualification, age, and sex. To some extent, these have important effect on their perspectives, attitude, performance and satisfaction. This paper focuses on the role played by teacher education in the rehabilitation of the nation's economy and reliance. It further identifies the main blocks that have cramped achievement of quality at the teacher education level in Nigeria. The paper concisely reveals some measures for remedying such constraints. It concludes by offering meaningful recommendations.

## **Introduction**

Since everybody is well acquainted with the word 'Teacher', it obviously doesn't require any definition, but for the sake of clarity, it is He/she who gives lesson or instructions on objects, games or instruments within or without the classroom.

Teachers are the backbone of any educational setting, they are the implementers of all educational programmes, the educators as well as the moulders of children's character who are supposed to be leaders of tomorrow. They also determine the standard of achievement at all grade levels. Their importance cannot be over emphasized, they at any level of education constitute an important element for the attainment of the desired educational objectives.

Nwagu in Asiya (2002: 11) emphasized the importance of teachers, he stated that:

The teacher is without doubt the greatest aid to learning and improvements in the learning process depends heavily on him. Therefore as circumstances permit he should be most carefully trained, maintained and supported.

To buttress the usefulness of teachers, there is an adage that the future of the nation rests in the hands of its teachers. The quality and character teachers possess today will surely be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow which will to a considerable extent determine the degree of contributions such citizens could make towards the overall development of the nation. One needs to ask himself a question here that despite their usefulness, are the teachers carefully trained, considered, maintained and supported? In Professor Babs Fafunwa's words, the most persistent and agonizing educational problem that beset African countries today is lack of training of the competent teacher.

Teachers are said to be the most neglected and treated lower in status than most of their counterparts in other sectors and teaching is now considered a dumping ground for the never-do wells or second choice to other professions.

It is also worth mentioning that teachers are swimming against the current and are working against odds, even though, the desirability of training in vocational and technical skills and indeed the overall problems of preparing the future citizens of Nigeria who will be fully oriented to their environment cannot be effectively accomplished without the aid of competent teachers nor can the demand for trained manpower be adequately met.

In the words of Fafunwa as opined in Akande (2001:68):

The services of the teachers are to the nation, for they, more than any other professional group influence the lives of the Nigerian youths and therefore the nation's future.

Aggeriwel in Akande (2001:68) also stressed the usefulness of teachers that the destiny of nation is shaped in the classroom and it is the teacher who is the very important instrument in moulding that destiny.

In the past, teachers were role models, leaders in their respective communities and highly respected. Hence teaching then was described as a noble profession because of the working conditions

and respect accorded the personality of teachers, they were satisfied and motivated. This is no longer the case.

Teachers have ever since become a marginalized group, they are denied the very benefits that education offers its recipients. Consequently, no bright person wants to opt for the teaching profession in today's Nigeria. Yet, no curricula no matter how well thought out can succeed without the teacher (UNESCO, 1996).

Teachers should be well cared for, well trained and demand to be recognised as belonging to the profession and deserving a place under the sun so as to stop the exodus of good brains from the profession, hence teaching profession should be relieved from boredom and monotony.

### **Relevance of Teacher Education to Economic Rehabilitation and Self Reliance**

"Teacher education is that form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those we teach, particularly but not exclusively in primary and post primary levels of schooling. In its extended dimension, it encompasses also the preparation of administrators, supervisors and guidance and counsellors within the same term of reference<sup>1</sup>" (Okafor in Toungo, 2001:33).

Teacher education is the key to educational development, for without an adequately trained teaching personnel, Nigeria cannot afford to expand the educational facilities and consequently development programmes can not be implemented as planned. Another definition of teacher education is that given by Yates in Agbunno (2001:131). It is "An institutionalized educational procedures which aims at the purposeful organized preparation or further education of teachers who are engaged directly or indirectly in educational activity as their life work".

Yates definition summarized the aim of teacher education in a general form, but sidelined its objectives such as preparation of administrators, supervisors etc. The National Policy on Education provides a meaningful proposal for the professionalization of teaching which is designed to upgrade the relatively low status of the teacher in Nigeria, in an effort to improve his social and professional status. A lot has to be done to reassure the Nigerian teacher of his relative worth in the social life of his community and the society at large. According to the national policy, teacher education is to be given by the following institutions:

- (a) Colleges of Education
- (b) Faculties of Education
- (c) Institutes of Education
- (d) National Teachers<sup>1</sup> Institute
- (e) Schools of Education in the Polytechnics

The National Policy on Education demands that all teachers in all educational institutions be professionally trained, be it primary, secondary or tertiary and that the minimum qualification of teachers in Nigeria to be the National Certificate in Education (NCE) but it seems that the above expression is doomed to oblivion as it is that there are more unqualified/untrained teachers (especially in the North) than the qualified or trained ones. Hence it is a mere wishful dream which will take so many years to come true. One may say without fear or doubt that any educational institution exists in Nigeria where all the teachers are professionally qualified.

Teacher education is very vital, Akande (2001:69) put it thus "The laudable objective of providing education for Nigerian citizens cannot be attained satisfactorily without paying proper attention to teacher education".

Initial teacher education programmes must be broad based to include many specialized fields to meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and allow for versatility of knowledge, coupled with specialization and teaching skills acquisition.

Rehabilitation on the other hand means to restore something to a good condition or bring back something that is good, become dilapidated then bring life back to it. While self reliance as put by Odozi in Oriola (2003) is a policy of generation through one's own effort, power etc. U means doing something that will generate income in order to survive, without having to rely on white-collar job. Self reliance is something to do with innovation for self satisfaction using one's own effort, ability, intelligence and one's own resources or factors.

Tamuno in Ololobou (2003) defined self reliance as a suitable utilization of nation's human and national resources to provide an enviable national sovereignty in all its facets or ramifications.

Going by the above definitions, it seems that teacher education has a role to play in the economic rehabilitation of the nation and self reliance. It is a well known fact that Nigeria is well endowed with human resources which are not fully utilized to boost its economy, this stemmed from the fact that there is a dichotomy between the rich and the poor, the qualified and unqualified teachers in terms of education itself, the rich search for a school with very qualified teaching team and pay enormous amount of money to see their children through while the poor attend a less privileged school with no qualified staff, these to put it more succinctly are left to be un-useful members of the society with no form of training vocational or non-vocational wise, this poses a serious set-back to Nigeria's economic rehabilitation and self reliance. If many teachers if not all are well educated there won't be heed for such dichotomy.

If the nation adheres to restore back its economy to the days of yore, and make its people self reliant, there is need to concretize teacher education programme, to stop the current bombastic behaviour about teacher education, as it is that proper education either for the teacher or by the teachers is the relish for better economic rehabilitation and self reliance because if teachers are properly educated, that will give birth to well educated, sound minded, competent, self reliant and vocationally trained individuals who may not necessarily rely on white-collars jobs but on themselves, on their own innovative initiatives and skills that will generate them income and these people will harness the nation's wealth and resources and utilize it, this will at one hand leads to economic growth and on the other to remedy the dire need for white collar employment among youths in the country.

Teacher education/training and especially vocational aspect has great impact on Nigeria's economic growth and rehabilitation as postulated by Nwoakolo in Okoro (2001:141) that vocational technical education is a valued sub-sector of the educational enterprise in Nigeria because it was the form of education, Nigeria knew before the arrival of the colonial administration which was highly valued as it prepared the young ones under the apprenticeship system for the vocation of the family and thus provided a means of livelihood for the members of the family.

This postulation demands that teachers at all levels be properly trained and educated so as to impart the knowledge to multitude of young ones who will learn to appreciate being independent through innovative work. Teacher education is needed to train a carpenter, a trader, a mechanic, a painter, blacksmiths etc. One of the aims of teacher education is to help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives and encourage spirit of creativity in the teachers. This point has to do with developing teachers' creative abilities. Through the education acquired teachers can begin to realize their roles and importance in the overall nation's growth and development, economically, socially and politically i.e. teachers are trained to train and are educated to educate which will in turn lead to proper economic rehabilitation and self reliance of Nigerians.

Education is viewed both as an economic investment and as a means of human development, as an investment, it is very vital for national development and also contributes directly to personal fulfillment and the growth of the individual for self reliance. Teacher training help in imparting the necessary skills for the production of technicians, technologists and other skilled personnel who shall be enterprising and self reliant.

For Nigeria to develop economically, socially and politically, there is need for quality in all the educational levels in the country particularly teacher education. This is so because teacher education, as put forward by the National Policy on Education, (1981) aims at:

1. Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
2. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in the teachers
3. To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives.
4. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignments and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country but in the wider world.
5. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

It seems pertinent to ask oneself a question of whether these aims are fully accomplished or not.

The answer is a very big no, they are yet to be realized. To buttress this statement Aworanti in Omakri J.O. (2001:18) maintained that:

There is poor quality of teachers resulting in low output. Hardly can you find a good typist or a good carpenter. It was also established that Nigeria did not have and still does not have an organized system for developing technical teachers.

One major worrisome problem that besets teacher education programme is lack of infrastructure and capital. Nwadiani in Omakri (2001:19) spelt out:

With no money left for capital projects, education as a whole in Nigeria remains undeveloped hence the growing mismatch between education and • economy.

The nation's economy is in shambles, it needs to be rehabilitated and this can only be done through providing a means of livelihood for the citizens, over dependence on government leads to economic deterioration, therefore, if a well planned, well implemented, hitch-free teacher education is embarked upon, more people will be trained to train others who will indulge in various activities. Even the teachers themselves with proper education they can invest in it in different ways. This to some extent may contribute to the growth and development of the nation's economy as well as self reliance. Fafunwa emphasized the importance of teacher education. He mentioned that the success or failure of all the educational goals depends entirely on the pattern, the content and the objectives of teacher education programme designed for these purposes.

It has been observed that the mainstream behind UPE's failure could not be divorced from the fact that teachers were not well trained and qualified neither were they dedicated and committed towards their task of moving the nation forward i.e. by imparting knowledge and not wastage to their pupils. Educational plans were refuted, those educationists who were in a position to implement any kind of educational endeavour were left at bay. Seminars and conferences which could help them improve professionally and intellectually were not mounted by the relevant bodies.

#### Major Constraints Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria

Some of the major constraints in teacher education were spelt out by Agbunno (2001) to include:

- (i) Poor teaching and learning.
- (ii) General poverty and lack of incentives.
- (iii) Lack of laboratory facilities, equipment and materials.
- (iv) Lack of clear policy on teacher education.
- (v) Poor conditions and terms of service for teachers.
- (vi) Lack of appropriate books and other learning materials.
- (vii) Lack of efficient and effective teacher support service.
- (yiii) Under-developed science and technology culture.

According to UNESCO (1981) the growth in population affected seriously the quality of education hence deleteriously affects educational development which means in the long run, the quality of the present education is not likely to produce the right materials for future leaders of the country.

These to mention a few, together with many others are the various problems which need addressing if quality teacher education programme is to be attained. More than anything else teachers are generally desirous of furthering their education, attending seminars and conferences which could help them improve professionally and intellectually.

#### Conclusion

To be self reliant, effective and competent, to rehabilitate Nigeria's economy, it is mandatory for teachers to update their knowledge either through training and retraining (in-service), periodic workshops and/or seminars etc.

This work suggests that more teachers go for vocational training so as to help train and produce more able human resource who will learn to appreciate their creative ability to develop independently and

be useful members of the society thereby helping the nation to develop and rehabilitate her economy. Government should stop temporizing decision where teachers' salaries, fringe benefits, remuneration, in-service training, provision of infrastructure etc. are concerned so that teachers commitment and output be increased.

Government should give emphasis to teacher education and adhere strongly to the National Policy on Education that minimum qualification for teachers at all levels of education tertiary exclusive to be NCE and that teachers who are yet to obtain the NCE qualification should be made to do so or be replaced.

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