THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) THROUGH THE RE-TRAINING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract
Over the years, the responsibility of teaching English Language to children in schools is becoming difficult for teachers and learning the subject is an uphill task for the students. The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) was initiated to re-train teachers of primary schools on the four core subjects they teach their pupils. These subjects are; English, Mathematics, Basic Science and Social Studies. The re-training of English teachers was mandatory on the government because of the innovations that were introduced in teaching. This paper examines how the MDG inspires the re-training of English teachers and how they can impact positively on the performance of their pupils. The data for this paper was collected from interviews with participants at the MDG training exercise of 2010 at Gwarzo Local Government Area in Kano state. The paper however highlights that the teachers that are being trained are not adequately equipped to be primary school teachers. They are either subject based teachers or those with straight degree qualification. The task of teaching in a primary school is not for those that have any degree qualification. It is meant for those that have read Primary Education Studies (PES) and any other subject. This paper recommends that the National Teachers Institute (NTI) advises states and local governments on the importance of sending the appropriate people for the re-training exercise.

Education is the bedrock of any society. Its importance to whoever has it is unquantifiable and not having it renders one almost impotent. This assertion is true as education is seen as the total development of an individual. Teacher education is an important aspect of any society. Awokoya (1972) defines education as the door to any meaningful national development and teachers holds the key to the door. This is in agreement with the policy that sees education as a fundamental tool for the total development of the society.

The National Policy on Education (NPE: 2007) reiterates that education as the bedrock of any society needs able teachers and teacher training institute. The
NPE: 2007 states “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 all educational planning and development.” This importance is further acknowledged by government’s conventions and agreements that are reflected in the principal policy documents that guide teacher education in Nigeria. These conventions and agreement were:

1. National Policy on Education (4th ed. 2004);
2. Minimum Standards for Nigeria Certificate in Education;
3. Guidelines on academic programme for Nigeria Certificate in Education;
4. Approved Minimum Academic Standards in Education for all Nigerian Universities;
6. TRCN’s Mandatory Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Manual;
7. TRCN Manual for Accreditation of Teacher Education in Nigeria.

In addition to the above guidelines, the Federal Government recruited 40,000 NCE graduates and deployed them to primary schools in 2006. The Special Teacher Upgrading Programme (STUP) was introduced to upgrade Grade II and I teachers to NCE.

Aim and Purpose of MDGs

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are international initiative to deliver a global compact between rich and poor nations in order to help them provide the basic human rights to all people. The MDG millennium declaration was made at the United Nations (UN) in September, 2000. It has 8 international development goals which all 193 UN member states and at least 23 international organisations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. Among the eight goals 3 are directly connected to education, gender equality and health, that is, goals 2, 3 and 6 respectively. The second goal of the MDGs is education. They hope that by the year 2015, all children can complete a full course of primary schooling, girls and boys. In order to achieve that, there must be enrolment in primary education, completion of primary education and literacy of all people between 15-24 years old both female and male. The amazing and disturbing factor here is over 7 million primary age children are out of school. Many children are out of school because of poverty.

The Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) through the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) in collaboration with the National Teachers Institute (NTI) organised a workshop to retrain teachers in the four core primary school subjects (Mathematics, English Language, Primary Science and Social Studies). The workshop is part of government ways to reach out to schools and improve quality of teachers. In 2006 about 145,000 teachers were trained.
Additional 145,000 were trained in 2007. There were also similar trainings in 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The objectives of the workshops were to:
1. Disseminate innovative practical skills that would enhance the teachers effectiveness and promote greater mastery of the subject matter by pupils;
2. Update the teachers knowledge of subject matter;
3. Contribute to the development of positive self concept and attitude towards the teaching profession; and
4. Enable teachers to make pupils to perceive learning as an interesting and pleasant activity that promotes the development of self-understanding, inquiring and critical thinking skills.

In order to achieve a successful workshop, some pre-workshop activities were carried out. They are as follows:
1. Setting up committees (coordinating, planning and implementation committee and MDG implementation Task Force), contacting and informing stakeholders (SUBEBs and LGEAs);
2. Pre-workshop Inspection visits to proposed MDGs training centres nationwide (Checklist for Inspection was designed and produced);
3. Procurement, production and supply of training manuals, equipment, stationary and instructional materials;
4. Meeting with executive chairmen of SUBEBs;
5. Press briefing by the Director and Chief Executive of NTI; and
6. Sensitization workshop on FME reform agenda.

One of the challenges of MDG on retraining of teachers is that some of the teachers are not qualified to teach in primary schools. The requirement of any staff that is eligible to teach in the primary school ought to be Primary Education Studies (PES) and any other subject. This is far from the reality as interactions with participants at the 2010 MDG retraining workshop at Gwarzo, Kano state portrayed something different. About 30 of the 50 participants interviewed were NCE holders in two subjects of which Hausa Language and Islamic Studies were the dominant subjects. Their combinations range from Hausa/Islamic Studies, Arabic/Islamic Studies, Hausa/Social Studies and Arabic/English. The closest combinations that can handle primary pupils effectively are Hausa/PES and Social Studies/PES and they were 20. This is far from what the retraining exercise is all about. The main goal is to retrain teachers on the four core subjects about the new developments in those subjects. This is supposed to help them be abreast with new innovations and better ways of managing their classes.

Why Teach English Language in Schools

Teachers of English language are saddled with the responsibility of teaching English language to school children from Primary schools to Tertiary institutions. The teaching of English language in
Nigerian schools is important because English language is the *Lingua franca*, that is, official language. It is taught as a subject and is also used in teaching all other subjects in schools. The teaching of English language in our schools is so important that the National Teacher Education Policy (NTEP: 2009) emphasized on the use of standards in the design of teacher education programmes, with focus on outcomes and teacher performance. The policy also says there should be recruitment of capable candidates that will be trained in both subject mastery and subject-based methodologies. This is why teachers that teach English in schools are supposed to poses a degree in English language, either B.A. Ed. English or B. Ed. Language Arts; NCE PES/English or English and any other subject.

The Achievements of MDG in Retraining of Teachers

The first MDG retraining exercise was carried out in 2006 and it has been a tradition to date. In (2006) the maiden edition of the MDG retraining exercise trained 145,000 in 148 centres across the nation. The overall goal of the MDG programme is to retrain primary school teachers in Nigeria. So far, from the manuals used in training them, the contents are good. They will help equip the primary school teacher with new ideas in teaching and learning situations. The manuals are always under review; this is so because the manual that was used in 2007 was upgraded in 2010. The 2007 manual did not have a lesson plan for every subject but the 2010 manual had a lesson for every subject. The 2010 manual was accompanied with a CD showing an effective and modern lesson delivery.

In the span of 5 years, almost a million primary school teachers have been retrained. By 2007, there were some improvements in the net enrolment ratio in primary school from 8:10 in 2004 to 9:10 in 2008. The increase in enrolment in primary schools created problems that the workshop cannot fix easily. These problems include: inadequate capacity building and staff development, large number of unqualified teachers and public primary schools infrastructural decay as well as dearth of teaching and learning materials. The problems enumerated above are in agreement with Mohammed (2009) problems of teaching English in primary school as classroom congestion, lack of good classrooms for learning, bad blackboard, dilapidated building, textbooks and lack of teaching resources.

Though the workshop has been going on for the past 5 years, there is a major funding challenge. There is grossly non-utilization of appropriated funds. Funds are released late and some funds never accessed. The participants are not paid on time because of lack of authentic list. The lists of participants are not readily available to NTI because the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) are always making changes to their participants to. NTI overcame these challenges by making sure that the participants are registered
before the commencement of the workshop.

NTI staff kept the participants in the training centres by circulating attendance in the morning and afternoon. This practice deterred participants that were not willing to stay throughout the workshop. The attendance is used for payments at the end of the workshop. So, any participant that has no full attendance might be punished by late payment of allowance.

**Conclusion**

The Millennium Development Goals is a laudable project. The Federal Ministry of Education and National Teachers Institute through State Universal Basic Education Board and Local Education Authorities retrain primary school teachers annually. This is done, to equip the teachers with new and innovative ways in teaching profession and to make them masters in their fields. Though it is a very good effort on the part of the government, the funds appropriated for the project are not readily accessed. It will be good if all the tiers of government involved work harmoniously to make the MDGs goal of education for all a success.

**Recommendations**

This paper recommends the following:

1. The local, state and federal government should make sure that qualified people are recruited when recruiting teaching staff, it will make retraining them easier because it will be improvement of knowledge.

2. NTI should make sure that incentives like some of the teaching resources used during the workshop are left to the school that were used as centres. This will make school authorities make sure their schools are equipped and kept in order so that they can be selected for the retraining workshop as centres.

3. The federal government should make sure that funds appropriated for the retraining workshop are released and in full.

4. NTI should make sure that banks make payments to participants as soon as the workshop is over.

5. Teachers are supposed to be trained annually. The current practice of training some teachers annually should be made possible to all serving teachers in the primary school.

6. NTI should insist on SUBEB and LGEA to send qualified teachers for the workshop. They should send their list on time, to give them enough time to scrutinize the list.

**References**


National Teachers Institute, Kaduna. Brief on 2006 MDG Retraining programme for Primary School Teachers.

National Teachers Institute, Kaduna. Brief on 2007 MDG Retraining Programme for primary school teachers.