
ENHANCING NIGERIA'S TEACHERS' EDUCATION FOR NATION BUILDING IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Today in Nigeria, current statistics by the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) (2017) aptly reveals that the qualities of teachers in schools are poor. The data shows that out of about 1.5million teachers that are registered with the TRCN, 50 percent of them lack the knowledge and skills to deliver the 21st century curriculum requirements (Adamu, 2017). This study tries to examine the deficit of teachers in Nigeria's schools which will require many years to fix. The discourse tries to examine the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria, and to suggest better strategies for enhancing effective teacher education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Teachers' education, nation building and development of Nigeria.

A teacher is a person whose profession is to impart knowledge, skills and good understanding of a better society and environment to the learner. Experience and data in recent time have painted a worrisome, sorrowful and lamentable picture of the quality of teachers in Nigeria's schools. The Minister of Education, (Adamu, 2017) pointed out that there is a 1.3 million deficit of teachers in the country which would require six years to fix. This study tries to examine the importance of teacher education and the enormity of the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria; so that Nigerian students will begin to enjoy the improving benefits of teacher education. The rationale for improving teacher education for nation building in the 21st century teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they need in order to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, and the wider community (Wikipedia, 2012)

This study tries to reveal that education is tied to nation building, development, wealth creation, good health and good life. Education is a driving force to enhance economic, intellectual, social and cultural empowerment of any nation. In Nigeria,

education is a major force, “par excellence” for affecting national development. (Elechi, and Ukwuba, 2012).

To explain the importance of education to nation building and development Prof. R.A. Ahmed Rufai, the former Minister of Education said that the National Policy on Education (NPE) is the national guideline for the effective administration, management and implementation of education at all tiers of government. This explains why in 2011, President Goodluck Jonathan initiated a transformation agenda to drive the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), one of the strategic goals of the transformation agenda was human development. In order to meet the ideas of human development, the federal ministry of education had earlier prepared a road map for the development of the Nigerian education sector in 2009. This was also followed up in subsequent years. These strategic plans in education have created and encouraged an expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social, and political development of the country (Rufai, 2013).

According to Rufai (2013) “The strategic plan for education in Nigeria was an aggregate tool of employment for the poor and the socially marginalized groups; an effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of human resources, as well as the development of competent work force through the acquisition of practical life skills relevant to the world of work as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies fit and relevant to the 21st Century. All these can be achieved through strategic and collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders... our covenant with every Nigerian child therefore is access to quality education relevant to the need of the Nigerian Economy. We will nurture the mind to create a good society that can compete globally, yes, we can...”

Hence, National Policy on Education (2013) explains that Nigeria’s philosophy of education is based on the following set of beliefs:

- a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
- c. Education maximizes the creative potential and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
- d. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- e. Education to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the need of the society;

Therefore, according to National Policy on Education (NPE) (2013), the goals of teacher education shall be:

- a. produce highly motivated, conscientious and effective classroom teachers for all level of the educational system.
- b. further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- c. help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.

- d. provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations and
- e. enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

All teachers in educational institution shall be professionally trained. Teacher education programme shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties. Information Technology (IT) training shall be incorporated into all teachers training programmes.

The Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria

The challenges facing teaching education in Nigeria include the following:

(1) Faulty Foundation of Teachers Training and Certification Processes

In Nigeria, the faulty foundation given to the teaching profession over the years, especially during the military era, has given the teacher education and training a blemished and bad name. This has impaired, weakened and given teachers training the last to be considered for any kind of in-service training. The result is that there is a complete loss of prestige and an invalid worth for the teacher in the society.

It is important to note that since teaching profession is far from being a profession, as a result of profligacy of the career by amateur and unprofessional job seekers. That since then the teaching career was unable to attract suitable qualified individuals to itself. The majority of those who read education in our higher institutions did not list for education as their first course of study. Education to most of them was their last resort, when such scholars graduate to become teachers; they have their eyes elsewhere for other careers thus leaving them distracted and unable to give their best to their pupils and students. Others who qualify in order fields apart from education, who do not desire to develop themselves along the teaching profession, as they hope to get out of the detested, despised and hated profession at the first opportunity; even though teachers always keep their eyes open for other lucrative-money making white collar jobs, such scholars see the teaching career as a poor-earning profession.

(2) Poor Teaching Methods and Limited Opportunities for Continuous Teachers Development

In Nigeria, it is unfortunate that the opportunities for training and re-training are hardly made available by the government and the private sector. A primary school teacher could have been in employment for thirty years and never attended any course or teaching seminar. The deplorable situation is also the same for the average secondary school teacher and some lecturers in the university. When a teacher or lecturer does not attend courses, seminars or conferences, they perish in lack of knowledge. With this situation of teacher education and training in Nigeria, what does the nation get in terms of development? Most of our teachers and lectures suffer in silence. They are out of touch with modern methods and techniques in the profession and poorly motivated to give their best. The teaching profession has become an all-comers' affair, making it

difficult to regulate practice and professionalism. Furthermore, dubious politicians in Nigeria sometimes influence employment of teachers in our educational system. This factor is also a challenge to teacher education in our nation as half-baked teachers are employed to give teacher education long suffering, scorn and to be looked down on by advanced nations.

(3) Lack of Political Will of the Government to Implement Policies and Programmes to Improve Teacher Education and the Teaching Profession

The Nigerian state seems to have lost focus to roll out policies and programmes to enhance teacher education in Nigeria, especially with the advent of the military in governance and the over centralization of power and the state resources at the centre, hence, impoverishing state governments with less fund to invest on teacher education. It is clear that since the military came to power in Nigeria, matters affecting teachers and the teaching profession have taken the back seat of priority in their scale of preference. This on the long run hinders nation-building when budgeting provision for education is poor.

(4) Poor Teacher Salary, Remuneration and Working Conditions for Teachers

In Nigeria, matters affecting teachers and their working condition have often taken the back seat in government priorities. Teacher's salary and remuneration, especially at the primary and secondary school levels, are the least anywhere in the world. They are the last to be paid and when there are short falls in earning as we are experiencing this period of recession; teachers are the ones who are owed basic entitlements for months, both at the local governments, states and federal levels. Teachers' welfare, maintenance of their classrooms and new infrastructures are the last to be considered for construction or building. As teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) data clearly show, the teacher deficit is huge, and the resources required to correct and fix them are yet to be properly enhanced, improved and strengthened.

To narrow down the challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria to the state level, (Nwagwu, and Onuorah, 2012) outlined the following as teacher education constraints in Enugu State:

- Low quality entrants into teacher education programme.
- Curriculum overhead
- Admission of uninterested candidates into teacher education
- Lack of adequate monitoring mechanism of teaching
- Lack of opportunity for professional growth
- Length of academic preparation
- Poor motivation
- Lack of commitment on the part of teacher educators
- Lack of adequate knowledge, skill, interest and attitudes
- Poor remuneration

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- Misappropriation of funds meant for education
- Inadequate funding of teacher education
- Untrained/under qualified teachers in the school system
- Non availability of teaching and learning facilities
- Poor perception of the teaching profession
- Poor welfare packages for teachers
- Poor quality teachers
- Teachers teach subjects they are neither qualified for nor trained to teach.
- Poor monitoring of teaching practice and evaluation
- Lack of adequate knowledge and skills
- Poor interest and attitude to teaching

Strategies and the way forward to Improve Teacher Education for Nation Building

- The government should professionalize the teaching profession so that amateur and unprofessional job seekers will be restricted from the teaching profession. These with basic Certificate in Education should be employed to teach from primary school to the higher institution.
- The federal, state and Local Government should commit not less than 20 percent of their total budgetary earning to teacher education and the educational system. Priority should be accorded to the primary and secondary levels. If the foundation is wrong, there is little the higher levels can do.
- The government at all levels should improve both material and human resonances on teacher education in Nigeria. Teachers should be accorded the pride of place in nation building in this 21stCentury.
- The recruitment of teachers should be done with excellence and merit. Good teachers should be rewarded while offenders should be punished to sanitize the teaching profession.
- The government and the private sector should partner to improve teacher education for nation building. As well, international partners should also come in to enhance the educational system in Nigeria.
- The government should also provide the infrastructural support, the palliative, sedative and calming environment to enable the educational sector to flourish.

Benefits of Teacher Education to Nation Building

The benefits of teacher education to nation building include the following;

- i. Teacher education helps to improve on the skills and knowledge of trainee teacher in the subject they are to teach.
- ii. Teacher education helps to enhance the understanding of teacher's pedagogy to enhance better teaching, instruction, tuition and tutelage for learners and future leaders of tomorrow.
- iii. It also helps to improve on the teachers with the basic skills and knowledge for effective teaching in the classroom environment.
- iv. It also helps to improve on the teacher's practical skills, competence, and human intellect for nation building.
- v. Teacher education helps to enhance nation building; there is a link between education and development, teacher education help to satisfy humanity with the basic human demand for knowledge and nation building.
- vi. Quality teacher education helps learners to acquire basic skills that will enable them secure gainful employment and earn a living.
- vii. Quality teacher education helps learners to get basic knowledge on public health awareness and environmental education.
- viii. Teacher education helps the society to know their human rights and to deliver democratic evidence and their civil rights in governance.
- ix. Teachers help learner to achieve their cognitive, affective and psychomotor development that will enable them to become functional so as to help the society. Nwangwu and Onuorah (2012).

Conclusion

Enhancing Nigerian teachers' education for nation building in the 21st Century is the right thing to do in the right direction. Though Teachers' Registration Council data clearly shows that teacher deficit is high in contemporary Nigeria, therefore, it should become mandatory for the Nigerian policy makers from the federal, state and local government levels to commit not less than 20 percent of their budgetary earning to improve on teachers education and earning and to improve on education and the educational system in Nigeria. This is because education is tied to development and nation building in this 21st century. Education and matters that concern teacher education should be taken seriously in the government scale of preference and priority. For too long now, we have got our priority on education wrong. The time has come for both the public and private sectors to partner to improve teacher education and the educational system in Nigeria to the right direction in this 21st century.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following as measures that would enhance teacher education for nation building in the 21st century.

- (i) The government should build a solid foundation for teachers training and certification process in Nigeria; specifically, low quality entrants into teacher education programme should be avoided.
- (ii) Teachers' salary and remuneration should be increased as it applies anywhere in the world. The welfare packages of Nigerian teachers should be encouraging to encourage quality teaching for nation building.
- (iii) The teaching profession should be considered for quality in- service training.
- (iv) The government and the society should restore the lost prestige of the teacher. Specifically on the area of their welfare and working conditions.
- (v) The Ministry of Education should eradicate obsolete teaching and learning facilities.
- (vi) The government and Ministry of Education should revitalize the perception of the teaching profession.
- (vii) The teaching profession should be professionalized to eradicate amateur and non-professionals in the education sector.
- (viii) The government should partner with the private sector and the international community to enhance teacher education for nation building in Nigeria.
- (ix) The government should provide the necessary support for infrastructures and the ease of doing business to enable other stakeholders to come in to revitalize the educational sector of the country. The education sector should be motivated to attract the best brains and commitment on the part of teacher educators to enhance the needed development of our nation.
- (x) Misappropriation of funds meant for education by dubious and corrupt Nigerians should be stopped.

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