

Sustainable Teacher Education in the 21st Century Nigerian Society



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ABSTRACT: For quality education in any country, teacher education should be given utmost priority. In Nigeria, teacher education is still battling with the problem of sustainability owing to the questionable process of training and professionalising teaching. This paper critically examines the process of teacher education. It queries the ideas of a qualitative teacher education. The paper utilises unstructured interview among selected personnel of Nigeria Teachers' Institute (NTI), Teachers Registration Council (TRC) for its findings. From these findings, it is inferred that government and its agencies have cogent roles to play in promoting sustainable teacher education in Nigeria. The paper therefore concludes that sustainable teacher education for the 21st century can only be guaranteed if teaching is seen and treated as profession like others in its ilk.

INTRODUCTION

The sociological and political exigencies of our contemporary society call for committed actions aimed at repositioning our educational sector with effective teacher education in consistence with Nigeria's National Policy on Education and the overall philosophy of the country's education. The aggregate ideas in country's philosophy of education are relevance, human and capital development and sustainable societal transformation manifesting in every sector of the country's economy.

Since the quality of country's education rests on the quality of teacher education irrespective of the levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary), Nigerian government, through relevant ministries and parastatal, should prioritise the education and training of teachers to meet up with the contemporary twenty-first century challenges in the areas of security, technological development and economic recession. This observation is better explained with the input-output continuum (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Jan, 2017; Osuji and Taiwo, 2019; Okoli, Ogbondah and Ekpefa-Abdullahi, 2015). The input-output continuum explains that "teacher-preparation programs provide educators with the tools, mentors, hands-on experience which they need to begin their career" (Jan, 2017:50). Considering the input-output continuum, teacher education is subjected to some degrees of complexity and dynamism in relation to the varied human and material resources required in the training of teachers for effective post-training service delivery. It is quite disheartening to understand that the whole country's education has been neglected by poor policy formulation and implementation – the situation that has been affecting the quality of teaching and teacher education.

We cannot ignore the fact that past governments in Nigeria have taken some steps to improve the quality of education in Nigeria with the convocation of 1969 National Curriculum Conference which later led to the publication of National Policy on Education (NPE) which was first published in 1979 (ten years after the National Curriculum Conference). One of the interesting issues raised in the National Policy on Education is the emphasis on teacher education in the section 57 (a-e) of NPE as reproduced below:

- a. to produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;
- b. to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c. to help teachers to fit into social life of community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- d. to provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing solutions; and
- e. to enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession.

The above goals of teacher education were carefully thought of and presented but unfortunately, successive governments in the country have not been consistent in the actualisation of these goals for sustainable and virile society in the 21st Century. The primary focus of this paper, therefore, is to offer some philosophical and ideological adjustments to be made in the country by all stakeholders to reposition teacher education and the overall education sector of the country for sustainable social and economic

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development of the country in the present dispensation of unpredictable changes. By doing this, this paper shall review the overall philosophy of Nigeria's education within the context of socio-political and economic realities. The paper shall further its argument by reviewing teacher education in the past and how to chart a new course for teacher education for the actualisation of the country's philosophy of education. Similarly, the paper shall discuss the problems of teacher education in Nigeria and how these problems can be addressed for sustainable development in the 21st Century Nigerian society.

NIGERIA'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN PERSPECTIVE

The four cardinal points of Nigeria's philosophy of education are the summary of the goals and national ideology of purposive and functional education in the country. In the National Policy on Education, it is written that the country believes that:

- a. Education is an instrument for national development; to this end, the formulation of ideas, their integration for national development, and the interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education;
- b. Education fosters the worth and development of the individual, for each individual's sake, and for the general development of the society;
- c. There is need for equity of educational opportunities to all Nigerian children, irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities each according to his or her ability;
- d. There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive; while interest and ability should determine individual's direction in education.

The section five (5) of NPE goes further to state that Nigeria's philosophy of education is based on:

- a. the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
- b. the full integration of the individual into the community;
- c. the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

For all the above philosophy of education in Nigeria to be realised, there is a need for functional teacher education. This position is made because teacher education involves training of individuals in the art and science of knowledge impartation through teaching-learning process. Teacher education is a continuous process beginning with a phase of initial training and continuous throughout the teacher's professional life throughout regular and sustained periods of in-service training. According to UNESCO (2005), teacher education addresses environmental, social and economic contexts to create locally relevant and culturally appropriate teacher education programmes for both pre-service and in-service teachers.

Unfortunately, the government of Nigeria has not been committed to the financing of education in the country. The budgetary allocation for education has been dwindling since the decades after first publication of National Policy on Education. The problem of financing education in Nigeria is attitudinal as evident in how successive governments have been attending to education at all levels. The most troubling situation is the attitude of successive governments to the financing of basic education – the foundation of the knowledge economy of the country. In the light of this, this paper corroborates Ewa and Ewa's (2019:10-11) view that:

Leaders and the political class – even the public, have over time pushed education at the foundations down the priority order. Such attitude indicates the amount of regard and investment given to this level of education in the context. A common perception about basic education is that it is nothing more than mere opportunities created to help children learn within formalized settings so as to develop into functional citizens. As such education at this stage is considered as being simple in content, involving people with low social worth who possess relatively low mental capabilities and skills, and therefore should be given a low budgetary allocation compared to other sectors of the economy.

The lackadaisical attitude of Nigerian government to financing basic education has been translated to the financing of other levels of education (secondary and tertiary) in the country. This lackadaisical attitude of the government to financing education in Nigeria returns us to the input-output continuum. There is inadequacy of human and material resources in the implementation of national philosophy of education which aims at functional education for virile and sustainable economy and national development. Our basic schools (primary and secondary) have inadequate human resources (teachers and support staff), infrastructure (class rooms, furniture) and learning resources (libraries, laboratories and other e-resources). Even in some private schools that can relatively make provisions for infrastructure and learning resources are also guilty of inadequate and inappropriate teachers for proper learning which is a catalyst for sustainable human capital development of the country. This phenomenon is not unconnected to

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dwindling economic situation of Nigeria and policy weakness that has encourage investors with no capital and material strength to venture into setting up private schools in the country (Ogbiji and Ogbiji, 2014; and Nwiyi, 2018).

The country can still return to the lane of sustainable development if there is a positive re-think in the financing of education in Nigeria. In this return, there should be dedicated attention to teacher education. The reason for this position is that teachers are the people who impart knowledge in the administrators, policy makers and technocrats that direct the country's economy. An effective teacher education has the propensity of ushering in a new dispensation of functional education for sustainable virile economy.

TEACHER EDUCATION IN HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Although ideally it should be conceived of, and organised as, a seamless continuum, teacher education is often divided into these stages:

- i. *initial teacher training/education* (a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher);
- ii. *induction* (the process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in a particular school);
- iii. *teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD)* (an in-service process for practicing teachers).

For the full realisation of all the national and educational goals of the country, teacher education should be given a priority. This is so because teaching requires professionalism for effective teaching-learning process. Professional development of teacher education refers to the development of a teacher in the professional role. This professional development is designed to foster the growth of teachers that can be used for their further development (Champion, 2003).

Our concerns in this paper are to examine trends in teacher education in Nigeria, problems and prospects of teacher education in Nigeria and to proffer solutions to how to make teacher education viable in the 21st century.

Teacher education in Nigeria cannot be discussed without a reference to teaching as a profession. Teaching is an old profession in Nigeria and it is expected that its status and that of teacher education should have been improved more than how it is today. Teacher education, according to Osuji (2009), refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the need of a society at any point in time. It includes training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on-the-job). As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organised education, both formal and non-formal sub-systems. A comprehensive discussion of teacher education cannot be possible without considering who a teacher is and the expected role of education in the life and profession of teaching.

In the past, teacher education in Nigeria began with the activities of Christian missionaries that established schools for the education of Nigerian masses. Owing to the lack of adequate white personnel that could teach the large population of Nigerians were trained in the art and science of teaching. It was based on this reason that so many teacher training centres were established across the countries. These training centres were pre-occupied with the teaching of Mathematics, English Language, Religious Morals and Basic Sciences. At the end of the training, the successful teachers were posted to schools in different parts of the country.

After independence, the Nigerian government saw the reason for educating the masses and took interest in teacher education. As a result of this, different programmes with formal arrangement were put in place to ensure that the teachers are well trained. Moronkola, Adegbile and Moses (2004:213) have observed that:

Balogun (1987) documented the structure of teacher education in Nigeria in a hierarchical order beginning with the Grade II Certificate followed by the Associate Certificate/ Diploma in Education (ACE/ADE) then, the National Certificate in Education (NCE), the bachelor degrees (B.Ed or B.A./B.Sc. Education), the postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), and even higher degrees in education.

From the above submission, it can be said that teacher education in Nigeria was well structured and properly planned from the inception. It gradually began and progressed from the lowest level to the highest level.

In the past, teacher education that was taken with due consideration for the professionalism in teaching that is reflected in the personalities of the teachers across levels. Though the salary was poor and the conditions of service not worthwhile, teachers used to demonstrate their intellectual acumen and good moral standards in the school and the entire community where the school is situated. Teachers in the past got their comportment and good behavioural disposition through the education and training they

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received. Sharing in the views of Cropley and Dave (1976), Osuji (1996:35) is of the opinion that teacher education should be given due attention and consideration for any educational advancement in a nation because teachers play important roles in realizing the educational objectives of any nation. In this direction, Osuji (1996:35) writes:

.....teacher education requires special consideration while deliberating on any educational innovation because “teachers are important factor mediating the effect of educational services, institutions and systems”. Also, the influence of teachers on the future personnel, social and productive lives of pupils reflects, to a great extent the professional training they have received.

The quality of education that Nigerian teachers in the past received was actually reflected in the attitude to work, professionalism, products that they have produced and social prestige.

Conversely, the hard economic situations in the country, misplacement of priorities by the Nigerian government, inconsistent government policies and lack of political will by the government are parts of the factors that affect teacher education in Nigeria. Teacher education in the present day is improperly and poorly implemented and this is negatively affecting the qualities of teachers and education in Nigeria. The fall in the educational standard in Nigeria from primary level to the tertiary level can be traced to poor teacher education. This opinion is premised upon the fact that no one can give what one does not have. In the present day Nigeria, some stages of teacher education are no more in existence. Moronkola, Adegbile and Moses (2004:213) observed that “in the present day Nigeria, apart from Associate Certificate in Education, all other types of teacher preparation and all other forms of teacher education still exist”. It is in the view of the present writer that the opinion of Moronkola, Adegbile and Moses is not adequate enough. This view is given because it is no more on records that Grade II Certificate Programme is still in progress. In the present day Nigeria, the minimum qualification of teachers is the National Certificate in Education (NCE). This arrangement has a negative impact on the teaching profession and the quality of teachers. Sadly, it is a common practice to see Secondary School leavers with no teaching qualification or experience to teach in private nursery and primary schools unlike in the past that the minimum qualification is Grade II Certificate. This negatively affects quality of education in the present day Nigeria.

Despite many colleges of education that are available in Nigeria (both private and public), the quality of teacher education is not encouraging. The ministry of education and the body (National Commission for Colleges of Education) are not adequately up to their task. The ministry and the Commission have been known with inconsistent policy and poor implementation of the minimum standards into these colleges of education. While making the minimum standards, the ministry and the Commission usually adopt top-down approach. This approach means that the instruction of what to do and how it is done come from the ministry and the Commission. This is an improper approach to teacher education in Nigeria. The teachers and administrators in these colleges, through their representatives should be involved for proper implementation of the minimum standards and other educational policies of the government. Though Commission (National Commission for Colleges of Education) has been trying to correct the anomalies by calling the meetings of the provost and the registrar while important policies are to be made yet the efforts are not enough to ensure quality teacher education in Nigeria. Isyaku (2005:11), the Executive Secretary of National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCCE) commented on the nature of teacher education in Nigeria and the roles of government, the Commission and other stakeholders in the promotion of teacher education in Nigeria. He writes:

The NCCCE was saddled with the responsibility of producing quantitative and qualitative teachers for the nations’ primary and JSS of education. The Commission had lived up to its bidding although have not reached the acme of our vision and mission. We cannot do it alone. The Federal Government should therefore pay more attention to teacher education, as no national can rise above the level of its education, the key of which are teachers. We similarly call on individuals and organisations to note the strategic nature of teacher education and support government. Teaching has to be compulsorily professionalised as a matter of urgency. Teacher education however requires periodic monitoring especially the academic programmes, acculturation, capital grants, teaching practice, SIWES, infrastructural facilities and admission regulations.... to leave teacher education in its present status quo is to accept to retrogress while other nations are progressing. This we cannot afford to and must not do.

The urgent call by the Executive Secretary of National Commission for Colleges of Education is aimed at ensuring quality teacher education particularly at the College of Education level. In the opinion of the present writer, promotion of quality teacher education should not be left in the hands of the government, ministries and commissions, teachers’ union also have valuable roles to play. It is, however, worrisome the way the National Union of Teachers (NUT) handle the fragile egg of teacher education in

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Nigeria. Unlike their counterparts such as Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) and Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) that has ensured professionalism in their respective professions, Nigerian Union Teachers (NUT) has not lived up to expectations in ensuring full professionalism of teaching. It can be said with no doubt that the union (NUT) has failed to live up to expectations in some of its founding aims and objectives, in the article 2 of the Union's constitution, the aims and objectives of the Union are stated and these are reproduced below:

- i. To foster unity and progress among all teachers in Nigeria;
- ii. To foster the spirit of active cooperation and comradeship between teachers and other workers;
- iii. To raise the status of the teaching profession through improved quality of education and conditions of service;
- iv. To promote and advance the course of education and the teaching profession throughout the federation and also endeavour to secure the removal of difficulties, abuses, anomalies, and obsolete regulations detrimental to progress;
- v. To enhance the social and of economic well-being of members and establish welfare funds for the benefit of members of the union.
- vi. To promote a forum for the cooperation of teachers and the promotion of their welfare, the interests of education and teaching profession.
- vii. To promote the corporate image of the union both nationally and internationally by ensuring the continued existence of a strong, virile and well articulated organisation;
- viii. To give leadership and stimulative interest in matters which foster national and international unity and understanding.

It can be said that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) has failed in some of its aims and objectives. For instance, the union has failed to promote academic excellence among the members. This is against the provision in the article 2, numbers (ii), (iii) and (vi) of the Union's constitution. The union has been found wanting in the area of conferences, seminars and workshops for the members. The members usually use the old methods of teaching which may not be applicable to the 21st century professional teaching in the country. For the country to have quality education the union should wake up to its responsibilities in the training of its members.

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

Considering the shortfall in the role of the government and other stakeholders such as NCCE and NUT, this paper makes some propositions for the promotion of sustainable teacher education in the 21st Century. The first step to be taken is the review of policy on education and other statutory documents that will enable the country's education to be properly and adequately funded. This review of policy and documents will reduce the poor attitude of government to the funding of education.

There should be collaborative efforts in the review of curricular of teacher education. The curricular should be attractive and functional directed at finding solutions to the contemporary national economic problem. Teachers should be trained in such a way that they will be able to engage in critical thinking that will foster effective learning. Teachers should be able to manage the physical and e-resources of learning as a product of their training and education.

All teacher training centres (college of education, faculty of education and institute of education) should be equipped with adequate and appropriate infrastructure and resources for effective training. This paper makes this position because many of our teachers in basic schools cannot handle and operate basic e-resources materials such as computers and projectors. For our teacher education to be sustainable, there is a need for technological-based learning because it is through this that our teachers will be able to re-direct their teaching-learning process towards addressing national economic, political and sociological challenges. Our teachers need to be compliant with modern trends in knowledge impartation because the world has become a global village. With the access to e-learning and e-resources in the course of their training, 21st Century teachers will be able to access information and new ideas in other climes for sustainable national development.

CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the trends in teacher education within the context of Nigeria's philosophy of education. The paper observed that the country has not actualised its philosophy of education because of the poor attitude of successive governments to financing of education in the country. This poor attitude to funding of education in the country has affected the quality of teacher and teacher education in the country. Christian missionaries contributed to the development of teaching and teacher education in the country with the establishment of teacher training centres and institutes. The country can attain sustainable

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teacher education in the 21st Century if government and all stakeholders demonstrate willingness and dedication to address the economic and sociological problems confronting the country's education sector.

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