

## **The Role of Teacher Education in Achieving Quality Education in Nigeria for a Sustainable Society**

**Jonathan Sabo Turya  
Ibrahim Dauda  
Alhassan Joseph Kuyedah**

### **Abstract**

This paper discussed the role of teacher education in the broader context of teaching and learning in achieving quality Education for a sustainable society. It discusses teacher education, analyses the historical contexts of the teacher education both during colonial era and after independence. It discusses how teacher education can achieve quality Education by discussing quality Education and its implication. Challenges facing Teacher Education were identified. Finally, it suggested or made some key recommendations to the reform and development of teacher education in Nigeria in order to better the lots of teachers.

**Keywords:** Teacher Education, Development, Reforms, Challenges

### **Introduction**

Teacher education 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 given society at any point in time. It includes training and or education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job). Every society requires adequate human and material resources to improve its social organization, preserve the culture, enhance economic development and reform the political structures. Education is often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity. Thus, teachers have important role to play in achieving quality education in Nigeria in order to adequately prepare the young for their roles in the society in order to achieve the set national objectives. Education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge (Abdul-Kareem, 2001). In this regard,

education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. It is the teachers who will ultimately be responsible for translating policy into action and principles into practice in their interactions with their students. (Odiba, I.A. 1999). supported this fact when he stated that Education is the key that opens the door to modernization. education unlocks the door to modernization, and added that it is the teachers who hold the key to that door. Nwogu (2006) stated that the quality of any educational programme depends on the quality of teachers. In education generally, there is a high degree of agreement that “no educational system can rise above the level of its teachers”. This can be influenced by the availability of adequate training and retraining programmes for those about to teach and those already teaching respectively. However, teacher education should be regarded as the bedrock for national development the major problem facing the nation has been that of getting teachers of quality. For teacher quality to rise above

the educational system, a strong teacher education programme is required.

## **Teacher Education**

Teacher education is policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, and the local and wider society. What role then can teachers play themselves to improve quality? Three things are discussed: - quality awareness - professional ethics and - professional freedom

**.1. Quality awareness and self-evaluation** Of general importance for teachers' ability to improve the quality of education is the ability to reflect on their own teaching, critically examine the methods used and looking for alternative ways of teaching (as mentioned in section 4.1 above). To create an increased "quality awareness" among teachers and help teachers to improve their teaching methodology and skills may be of crucial importance to improve quality in education. One major way of doing this is to systematically evaluate the own teaching and its results. Evaluation is a general term used to describe any activity where the quality of provision is the subject of systematic study

In order to make evaluation a tool which teachers can use to improve the quality of education there is a need to find and highlight alternative methods for evaluation which allow for the consideration of the complexity of the school environment and which give teachers a possibility to be part of the process. One concept that is often used is school-based evaluation, meaning a process by which teachers discuss their own school as a group of professionals in such a way as to improve the quality of education.

The European Union( EU) Pilot Project on Quality Evaluation in School Education has played an important role to underline how teachers can be part of evaluation and use evaluation to improve education.

## **2 Professional freedom**

The professional freedom of the teacher is of crucial importance in developing quality in education. Professional freedom does not mean that the teacher can do whatever he or she likes, but that the teacher, who knows the students, is the person best equipped to decide which methods to use in order to create an optimal learning situation. Professional and academic freedom for teachers is also of crucial importance in achieving teaching that is independent of any political, economic, ideological or religious influence, in order to preserve young peoples' right to and democratic exercise of critical creativity. There has to be a general thrust in the creativity of the teacher. How the teaching is done in the classroom should never be prescribed by persons outside the classroom reality. This does not imply that authorities should not suggest new teaching methods through in service training, professional development and other means. For teachers to be given different approaches and models for their teaching is important and necessary, but it must never turn into a process of dictating which methods to use.

## **.3. Professional ethics**

Another important issue is the professional ethics of teachers. Teaching is becoming a more and more complex task. Teachers meet a large number of children and young persons from different backgrounds. In many education systems teachers have also been given more and more responsibilities. All these developments underline the questions related to the responsibilities and duties of teachers. This has also been

reflected in a growing discussion on professional ethics among teachers.

In this context it is of special importance to relate the professional ethics of teachers to the Convention of the Right of the Child. Several articles in the Convention have direct implications for the professional ethics of teachers. It is important that the teaching profession through its organizations discuss and clarify how the provisions of the Convention should be incorporated into the ethics and professional standards of the teaching profession. For example what does it mean to take full account of the child's best interest in all actions concerning the child, to protect the child from interference with privacy, to protect the child from maltreatment, to protect the child from drug abuse or to protect the child from sexual exploitation.

### **Teacher Education in Contemporary Nigeria**

The issues of teacher preparation, supply, status enhancement, motivation and retention as well as continuous training and retraining are at the heart of education reform at all levels. The overarching goal of human capacity development for the efficient and effective delivery of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), Education for All (EFA), and related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is that *by 2015 Nigeria will have human resources base to manage and implement the UBE scheme* (National Action Plan [NAP] 2006: 53). Thus, through strategic actions that include the following, objectives seemed realizable:- continued expansion of teacher training opportunities;- continuous programme of enhanced status and professionalism for teachers through training and retraining, reviews of current remuneration packages, and enhanced career opportunities;-

Programmes designed to address the capacity needs of schools and educational

management;- building the capacity of the inspectorate services to improve quality;- engaging civil society partners in the roles of quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment work at all levels. The need and critical role of professionalizing the teaching profession, vested in the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), by virtue of the Teachers Registration Council Act, began in 2007 with the mandatory registration of all professionally qualified teachers. This action is equally matched with comprehensive training and in-service training seminars and workshops in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. More importantly, the TRCN has begun implementation of the NPE provision that *all teachers in education institutions, including universities shall be professionally trained* (National Policy in Education NPE Section 8(b) paragraph 72, 2004]. This was in a bid to ensure adequate supply of manpower in Nigerian schools in conformity with the goals of teacher education as specified in Section 8(b) of the (National Policy in Education NPE, 2004), paragraph 70-79, the (NAP,2006) and the 10 Year Strategic Plan, among others. While the goal of the Strategic Plan is to design a teacher education framework, based on what teachers should know and do relative to Nigeria's new vision and mission.

Today, teacher education is much improved than it was before and a few decades after independence. The National Policy in Education NPE, released in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 clearly articulates the importance attached to teacher education and affirms that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The policy makes it mandatory for all teachers in Nigeria to be trained and stipulates NCE as the minimum qualification for the profession. It also provides that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of

changes in methodology and in the curriculum, even as it underscores the need for teachers to be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. It further recognizes the need for in-service training as an integral part of continuing teacher education. Today, the statutory responsibility for teacher education in Nigeria is vested in Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, Polytechnics, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Nigerian Universities' Faculties of Education. Nigerian Polytechnics and Colleges of Education award the NCE which is a sub-degree but professional teachers are expected to at least, have diplomas obtainable after three years of full-time study. The admission requirement for the NCE programme is Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) or its equivalent with passes in five subjects including English language, and the curriculum for NCE teachers is designed to produce teachers exposed to a range of courses covering all that is required to make them competent professionals. New courses such as Computer Education, Mathematics and general English have been made compulsory for all NCE students. On its part, the NTI was established in 1976 by decree No. 7 of 1976 to offer upgrading programmes for teachers through distance learning. Similarly, Institutes of Education in the various universities have also been involved through distance learning and offer of part-time courses for the training of teachers who earn NCE, B.Ed., and PGDE certificates on successful completion of studies. On the other hand, faculties of education prepare pre-service teachers for B.Ed., B.A. (Ed.), M.Ed., and PhD degrees. There are four major components of the degree program in the Nigerian universitiesnamely, General Studies, Educational studies, Studies related to the students' intended field of teaching and teaching practice.

### Quality Education

Every society requires adequate human and material resources to improve its social organization, preserve its culture and enhance its economic development. This is obtainable not only through Education but through quality Education. Quality Education aims at attaining set standard desirable to make them efficient and effective at any given point in their society at large. Quality Education means attainment of the higher and finest standard of Education. Ogunyika, Okeke, Adedoyin,(2015) define quality education as that distinguishing that brings out or expresses the worth or goodness associated with Educational programme. Quality Education then can be a sound and high level of knowledge or Education an individual receives in a formal setting. Education can be qualitative if learners of an Education system demonstrate competence during and after leaving school. The general public is highly involved in issues relating to Education, more especially its quality. The government of this nation and the teaming populace are anxious about quality Education The Government is devising a mechanism that can ensure good quality Education.

### Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria

In spite of the various recommendations and reforms that targeted repositioning teacher education in the country for optimal performance, the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria are still numerous. While some of these emerged with the changing socio-economic and political condition of the time, others evolved as a result of government neglect of the education sector especially as it concerns keeping pace with emerging realities, such as, servicing Nigeria's growing population, education demand and needs with matching supply of education services and facilities. Some

of these challenges are specifically examined as follows;

### **1. Poor Policy Implementation**

Poor policy implementation is a challenge to quality delivery of teachers' education. The poor quality delivery is responsible for the abysmal low performance of teachers' graduates from the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. However, several factors could be adduced as inhibitors to smooth implementation of educational policies and thereby resulting to poor quality delivery.

**2. Poor Conditions of Service and Brain Drain Syndrome.** In Nigeria, teachers' conditions of service do not hold enough incentives to attract and retain the best brains in Nigerian schools (Osokoya, 2012). As a result of the weakening attraction to the teaching profession, and by extension the resultant dwindling enrolment in the teacher education programs, those who remain in the profession maintain relatively low social status with accompanying psychological problems. Consequently, within the remaining pool, some teachers either seek opportunities in other sectors (within the economy) with better service incentives or even migrate to other countries where teachers' conditions of service are much better, in search of greener pastures. The quality or standard of education in Nigeria has reduced in recent years because of, among other factors, the brain drain phenomenon.

### **3. Non-Professionalization of Teaching**

Many teachers in Nigeria have not measured up to the minimum international standard. This is because a large number of untrained and half-baked personnel are still retained in the system, leading to a scenario in which career in teaching is not yet professionalized. Many unqualified teachers are still in the employment of

some States Teaching Service Boards, while most higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes this training mandatory and pursues the policy vigorously, teaching will continue to be open to anyone and this situation holds the potentials of further eroding professionalism in teaching profession (Osokoya, 2012). Certainly, this has other wider socio-political and economic implications given the fact that education remains a very essential component that produces a healthy and prosperous nation.

### **Conclusion**

In Nigeria, like many other developing countries in the world, teaching is the most vital and strategic profession for national development. Education remains a single major factor for national development. The teacher is central in this enterprise, and no tool has been able to replace the teacher yet; this is because no educational system can rise above its teachers. The teacher holds the remedy to the many problems ravaging Nigeria.

### **Recommendations**

As a result of the foregoing, the paper proffers the following recommendations

1 Emphasis should not be put on the teachers' specific needs, but on the creation of a suitable learning environment for students. Systematic certification for teachers and accreditation for teacher education providers have to be put into place. Educational authorities can establish professional standards, independently to what is taught in the teacher education programmes.

2 There is the need to weave closer cooperation bonds between the different providers of teacher education, in order to articulate teacher education as a continuum.

3 There should be tight linkages between teachers' own professional development, the responsibilities that they are given and the school's goals.

4 Alternative teacher education programmes should be created. The main purpose should be to increase the supply of teachers in areas of need, geographical, or relative to a particular subject (IT, languages, mathematics, etc.).

5 Clinical experience should be provided to teacher candidates early and throughout their education program, so that they would, early in their training, develop an image of what teaching involves and requires.

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