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## **THE CHALLENGES OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is universally viewed as the vehicle that is capable of importing and exporting transformational behavior, growth and sustainability of nation's wealth. It is a channel to articulate new ideas, thought and futuristic aspirations of an individual and nation at large. Nigeria has witnessed several educational reforms as evidenced in the number of revisions of her National Policy on Education. . However ,with the growing trend of the global education which entails the use of Science/Technology and Information Communication Technology (ICT) and where the communication infrastructure like telephone, fax, e-mail and computer networking have turned the world into a global village, Nigeria Teacher Education has been placed at a disadvantaged position. This paper therefore adopted the use of historical approach to argue out the contentious issues involved. It further observed with dismay that inconsistencies in government policy formulation and haphazard implementation of such policies have sufficiently affected the quality of education delivery in Nigeria. It therefore suggests that the regulatory bodies or agencies responsible for the training of Teachers in Nigeria should embark on aggressive reforms in order to re-direct Teacher Education in Nigeria to meet global expectations. It finally submits that since education is the only valuable asset a nation can offer to her citizens, politics should not be brought to bear on anything that has to do with it in order to avoid a situation whereby, the future of the citizens is jeopardized educationally.*

## **Keywords**

Challenge, Teacher Education, Education, Quality Education, Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

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## **1. Introduction**

Education as a social institution plays a very fundamentally significant role in any society. Owing to this role, every nation endeavours to provide quality education for her citizens with a view to achieving self-development. Considering its potent contributions to the society, institutions growth and development depended on quality education for the desired difference to be actualized.

However, to achieve the desired quality development, quality education and Teacher Education must be repositioned to address some critical challenges otherwise; the dreamed development will be a mirage. It is on this premise that this paper attempts to examine the development of Teacher Education, the current position of Teacher Education in Nigeria, and the challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria in the contemporary society. Since different nations attain successes through the sustained quality of their educational institutions, Nigeria cannot be left out in the League of Nations in the quest for quality education. Given the multiplier effect of teacher education, the search for quality in education must begin with teacher education. This is so because according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. This assertion led our education policy makers to say that teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development.

The effort to achieve quality teacher education has not been without some challenges. It is our intention in this paper to x-ray some of these challenges. For clarity purposes, we shall first off all attempt to explain some concepts basic to this topic. One of such concepts is the word challenge. In the context of this paper, challenge is viewed as those factors making it difficult for Teacher Education to strive significantly. They are factors that either hinder development or pin down the spate of development in the educational sector. Next to the concept of challenge in this paper is that of education. For the purpose of this paper, education is defined as that platform where knowledge, skills, habits and information are professionally gotten via a teacher. In other words, it is the process of learning the skills of reading and writing and other related virtues therein.

Another factor that deserves clarification is teacher education. This refers to the policies, procedures and provisions designed to equip prospective Teachers with the necessary knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community (Wikipedia Contributor, 2017). It is also a training received by a person in a training institution of learning in order to become a teacher. Principally, Teacher Education is the preparation and training ground for pre-service and in service knowledge given to both the would-be and serving teachers. Through teacher education both pre- and in-service teachers acquire the professional knowledge and skills which they require in order to educate others. It goes to say therefore that teacher education is a professional knowledge and skill gotten from a professional and specialized institution for the purpose of providing transformative, critical thinking, independent learning skills to others.

## **2. Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher training had been noticed in Nigeria in the 19th century long before the accreditation of teacher training institutions. Most teachers received informal instruction in the home of the Reverend Fathers and pastors in charge of Christian denominations. Candidates were chosen for the promise they showed as leaders, for their intelligence and the zeal with which they embraced the word of God. As they were teachers/catechists, the formation of good morals and ability to preach the gospel were emphasized (National Teachers'Institute (NTI), 2000).

Teacher education came into existence in Nigeria as an off-shoot of the activities of the Christian Missionaries (Shoja, 2012). Ajayi & Ayodele, (2002) are of the view that the idea of teacher training originated from the need to train people to lead the missionary crusades of propagating the gospel during the early Christian missionary era. They further opine that the first training college was founded by the Christian Missionary Society in Abeokuta in 1859. This college they say was known as the "Training Institution". Some hostilities in Abeokuta in 1867 led to the expulsion of the missionaries from the town and that made the training institution to be moved to Lagos to become an arm of a Grammar School. However, the establishment of St. Andrew's College, Oyo in 1896 drew the landmark in the training of Teachers in Nigeria.

It is pertinent to observe here that the singular efforts of the Christian Missionary Society (CMS), were supported by other similar missionary bodies. For instance, the Baptist Mission founded the Baptist Training College at Ogbomoso in 1897. The Wesleyan Methodist

Missionary Society opened an institution to train Catechists and Teachers in Ibadan in 1905 with four pupils (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2002).

It is evident from the foregoing that the initial conception of teacher education in Nigeria seemed to be exclusively missionaries' affairs. However, in 1921 the Government founded the Katsina Training College for a five year training course for teachers. It was designed primarily to develop the personality of the teacher as well as his knowledge of the subjects and the development of the skill in imparting them. The curriculum included spoken English, Mathematics and English compositions. Meanwhile, in 1922, Phelps Stokes' Commission made some useful recommendations to the government for the teaching profession. Among these are:

- The educational needs of the masses for the training of teachers and for the preparation of professional men should be clearly distinguished.
- The Government should provide for the temporary employment of teachers of lower qualification. This is recommended on the condition that adequate supervision could be assumed and facilities developed for the supply of better prepared teachers (NTI, 2002).

According to Durosaro (2006), before independence, there were few secondary schools in the country with the bulk of their teachers as expatriates and missionaries. Most of those teachers had no teacher education. Sooner after independence changes and reforms were witnessed in the country's educational system. In order to ensure good quality education steps were taken to have only qualified teachers in schools. This development saw the upgrading of Teachers Grade 111 programmes to Grade 11 institutions. In 1962, a new Teacher Certificate, the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) was introduced. The then newly established Advanced Teachers Training Colleges (ATTCs) offered courses leading to the acquisition of this certificate (NTI, 2002). It is this ATTCs that metamorphosed into Colleges of Education in Nigeria today.

The desire to reform her education was intensified after independence. This resulted in the September 1969, National Curriculum Conference. Participants at the conference were determined to see Nigeria chart a new front in her educational systems (Ada, 2013). Such a system was perceived to empower the country toward the path of scientific and technological development. Another effort that worked for the repositioning of Teacher Education in Nigeria was the Ashby Commission which recommended the training of more Teachers for the nation's secondary schools. These recommendations to a large extent helped in the creation of more Teacher Education department in the existing University and more Teacher training colleges were established.

## **2.1 Purpose of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Inherent in the above reforms are the following purposes of teacher education as stated in The National Policy on Education:

- ❖ To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- ❖ To encourage further, the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- ❖ To help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- ❖ To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situation.
- ❖ To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. ( FRN,2004:39)

The attainment of these and other goals of teacher education is a sine qua non for development in any sector of education in the country. The veracity of this assertion lies in the fact that “no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers” on whose onus lies the translation and implementation of government policies on education. .Mallison, (as cited in Shojo, 2012), subscribes to this view by noting that “in any process of education, there always stands the teacher in the front or at the back, at the center or at the sides...” and that what he knows and does makes a great difference whereas what he does not know, cannot do, or fails to do can be an irreparable loss to the child and the society at large. It is the realization of this fact that must have influenced certain actions by the government which prompted people like Durosaro (2006) to say that teacher education in Nigeria today is much improved than it was in 1970. Such actions includes the specification in the National Policy on Education Implementation Committee blueprint the following types and qualification of teachers required at different levels of education in the country:

- a. Pre-primary education: Grade 11 Teachers with NCE Teachers as heads.
- b. Primary education: NCE Teachers with graduates as heads.
- c. Junior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates.
- d. Senior Secondary Schools: NCE and University graduates with professional qualifications.

- e. Technical Colleges, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education: University graduates with postgraduate qualifications with their disciplines together with professional qualifications, practical industrial exposure and experience.
- f. University: University graduates with post-graduates qualification together with professional qualifications and experience.

## **2.2 Teacher Education in Nigeria Today**

With the implementation of Federal Government's policy of making the NCE the minimum teaching qualification, possession of Grade 11 Teachers Certificate no longer qualifies one to teach at any level of Nigerian education system. The Grade II Teachers Colleges have therefore been phased out. Teacher Education is there offered in Colleges of Education and University Faculties of Education. The extent to which this development has enhanced the quality of education in the country is subject to differing views. Thus, while some people see this as progressive and a means of enhancing the quality of education, others see it as counterproductive. A critical observation of classroom processes in the primary and pre-primary schools where NCE holders are teaching and an assessment of NCE student- teachers on teaching practice lead to the conclusion that NCE holders of today do not have the competence displayed by former holders of Teachers' Grade II Certificate.

On the other hand, the existing infrastructures in most teacher education institutions in the country is nothing to write home about. Substandard buildings and their accompanying substandard furniture are supplies to schools which make learning and teaching obviously difficult. Quality assurance is not fully implemented in the NCE teachers' programme of today. The quality of teacher education programmes at both the pre-service and in-service levels has deteriorated. The resultant effect of this is shortage of competent teachers in the nation's primary and secondary schools. This is irrespective of the large number of teachers being churned out of the Universities and Colleges of Education. All these have been negatively influencing our educational system. Commenting on this shameful development, Denga, (2011) remarks that serious study habits have declined. Elaborating, he says that most students prefer short cuts as manifested in cheating in examinations, copying of term papers/assignment from brighter students, sorting out grades with lecturers and involving in other illegal and indecent ways to pass examination. This is a minus for quality teacher education as it fails to reflect the purpose for which teacher education was established.

The above shortcomings in the education sector among other things pose some specific challenges to education in Nigeria in general and to teacher education in particular. The rest of this paper is devoted to a discussion of those challenges to teacher education.

### **3. Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher education in Nigeria today is faced with a lot of challenges. Among these are:

#### **3.1 Government's inconsistency in policy formulation and implementation**

The challenges of Teacher education in the contemporary society require formulation and implementation of policies that would place education on a vintage position. Nigeria was once described by a foreigner as one of the greatest countries of the world because of her capacity to endure mismanagement of human and material resources. Which-ever way, there is element of truth in the description.

The introduction of religion and ethnicity into governance by government functionaries sufficiently brought in some inconsistencies in the running and operations of government policies. It is usually common for a new Minister/Commissioner in the minister of education or state to discontinue with policies of his/her predecessor. This may be because the policy does not favour the region where he/she might come from or in order to render some form of favour to his/her friends to benefit from his/her opportunity in authority.

It is pertinent to mention that it is only in Nigeria that government roll out many agenda in a particular administration. Elsewhere, the story is different. For instance, during his election campaign, the British former Prime Minister Tony Blair made education the main issue in his agenda. Consequently, before he swept to power in May 1997 he made a pledge of: "Education, Education, and Education" at the Labour Conference in October 1996 (The Guardian, 2003). He informed his countrymen that Britain was 'lagging behind' the other developed nations in education and they cannot afford to fold their arms and watch. You can also recall that president Barrack Obama of the United States once gave the same priority to education.

The fact that Britain and America of all nations are not yet satisfied educationally shows that Nigeria ought not play politics with education knowing that their the future development hinges on it. Emegwali (as cited in Ker, 2012) commented on the necessity of improvement in the education sector by saying that unless Africa significantly increases its intellectual capital the continent will remain irrelevant in the 21st century and even beyond. He went further to remark that Africa needs innovative producers of knowledge and wise men and women who can

discover, propose and then implement progressive ideas. He goes further to say that the challenge of education in Nigeria will be eroded away until this requirement is met.

### **3.2 Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The 21st century poses another contemporary challenge towards education which is the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals include:

- End poverty in all its forms
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved
- Good Health and Well-Being for people
- Achieve Gender equality and Empower all Women
- Ensure available and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation
- Ensure Access to Affordable and Clean Energy
- Promote Sustained, Inclusive and sustained Economic Growth
- Reduced Income Inequality within and Among Countries
- Make Cities and Human settlements Inclusive, Safe, resilient and Sustainable (Wikipedia Contributor,2017) If these goals are to be attained, then there must be an aggressive redirection and restructuring of the current Teacher Education since the teacher is vested with the responsibility of driving government policies and programmes to the society.

### **3.3 Implementation Challenges**

The challenges for the implementation of Teacher Education budgets and reforms in Nigeria demand a collective effort between the three key agencies that have the mandate of overseeing Teacher Education. They are:

1. National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)
2. The National Teachers' Institute (NTI)
3. Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN).

The inability of government to make sufficient budgetary provisions for the agencies to work effectively poses some challenges. Nevertheless, these bodies must play critical role in ensuring the continuous development of the teachers and Teacher Education. In their efforts to implement the new teacher education programme attention should be focused on the following three major areas required for effective implementation as identified by Ada (2013):

1. Evolvement of new methods of instruction.
2. Creation of child learning friendly environment.

3. Minimum professional standards for teacher educators with emphasis on: What they should know, what they should do, and their expected dispositions.

### **3.4 Poor Funding of Education**

Financing education is another big political minefield. Meanwhile, skilled manpower production for accelerated development through education is domicile in the higher education. Unfortunately, education in general has received afternoon beating and neglect of poor funding. This is manifested in the decline in yearly budgetary provisions for education. It is pathetic to note that poor funding of education is a stumbling block in meeting institutional requirements for training of teachers. Gbadumosi (2006) supports this view by noting that one major challenge of Teacher Education Programme Implementation is inadequate funding. This lapses he further says is directly on the part of the government.

### **3.5 Low Level of ICT**

Most colleges of education in Nigeria can only provide the theoretical aspect of professional courses such as computer science, Business Education among others. In most cases, students group themselves to make use of the available computers and other technological apparatus hence they are not sufficient. Teacher of the 21st century ought to be ICT complaint. This is however not the case. This shortcoming explains the concern expressed by (Ada, 2013) that the issue of illiteracy even among teachers is worrisome.

We are today in a new world. A century where information technology is dictating the pace of development. A century where communication infrastructures like telephone, Fax, E-mail, and computer networking are turning the world into a global village. A century where you simply press a knob and information and knowledge are made available in a matter of seconds. The influence of the World Wide Web (www), which provides ready access to information wherever it is situated in the world cannot be ignored. This is where the Nigerian Teacher and would-be Teachers are yet to be adequately trained or equipped.

Nigerian Teacher Education is lacking in the area of application of information and communication technology. The hitherto basic means of disseminating educational information which is through radio broadcast is no longer performing this function effectively. Airtimes are now commercialized and thus, mainly patronized by politicians who use these as a means of promoting their selfish interests.

### **3.6 Inadequate Resource Base**

To establish any meaningful development, human efforts that create quality must be installed. Quality delivery in teacher education will be illusive and practically a mirage without the existence of the corporate components and qualified personnel in the school system. To manage the present challenge of Teacher Education in Nigeria, the industry will have to produce people with critical minds, intellectual capacity and appropriate productive skill to redirect the course of Teacher production.

It is worrisome in Nigeria that politics and political issues are central in the managing of issues of development. It appears that today, Nigeria has no need for intellectuals, producers of knowledge, wise men and women. The resultant effect is that any society that despises intellectually wise men will end up like smoke in the air and sentiment and “pull him down” syndrome will become more treasurable. Institutions of Teacher Education in Nigeria need intellectuals, producers of knowledge, etc in order to produce valuable, quality and competitive teachers for the country.

### **3.7 Governance**

Governance in recent years have assumed an unfortunate dimension in Nigeria. The agencies tasked with the responsibility of overseeing Teacher Education in the country are faced with chains of problems. The appointment of the Board Chief Executive and members of Governing Councils have become a source of concern to many. Professional and seasoned politicians are usually the choice than seasoned educationists.

In Nigeria, the politics of religion and ethnicity are usually in the front banner. As a result of these abuses, politicians are also the contractors, who decide whether to do the haphazard job, start and abandon the job or not starting at all. Invariably, the survival of Teacher Education in Nigeria is on the merciful hands of the professional and seasoned politicians.

### **3.8 Lack of Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance in the words of Iheji, Ifeanyiase & Olaitan (2010) is a distinguishing parameter or characteristic that brings out or exposes the work or goodness associated with the level of excellence in performance which can be measured by established criteria and standard. The authors further said that the quality means the availability of inputs, their adequacy and sustainability for teaching manipulative skills. In the opinion of Olaitan, Amusa & Nwobo (as cited in Dede, 2013), quality assurance is the practice of checking the quality of goods or

services rendered by an individual or company so that the standard will continue to be good. Therefore, quality assurance can be carried out through the assessment of the performance. In reality, that is how it should have been. But the story is different in Nigeria. Some executive officers of educational institutions most times connive with the contractors to execute substandard projects which are commissioned.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Nigerian Teacher Education in the 21st century needs to join the rest of the world in the use of communication technology if the country must not remain a perpetually a dumping ground for the products of such technologies. It is in the bid to meet this requirement among other things, that the National Policy on Education as produced in 1977 has been severally reviewed. This is necessary since according to this document, education is an instrument “per excellence” for effecting development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

The effectiveness and quality of any educational system is a function of the effectiveness and quality of production of teachers for the system as the quality of any system of education can never rise above the quality of its teachers. The 21st century era, is an opportunity Nigeria should take advantage of to restructure her educational systems in general and Teacher Education in particular. Part of such restructuring demands that those factors that impact negatively on the quality of teacher education in the country such as politicization of education, religion, ethnicity, among others be done away with in the management of education. Not until this is done, Nigeria will remain economically dependent on the developed nations rather than be a key player in the global economy.

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