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**Bright Chima Megbo**  
Academic Planning Unit,  
Federal University Wukari,  
Nigeria

**Abdulganiyu Saka**  
Academic Planning Unit,  
Federal University Wukari,  
Nigeria

## Challenges and prospects of teacher education in national development

**Bright Chima Megbo, Abdulganiyu Saka**

### Abstract

This paper on teacher education and national development in Nigeria highlighted issues, challenges and prospects of an effective teacher education system. It examined the concept of teacher education and some of the major steps necessary for guaranteeing quality teacher education such as the importance of equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. Types of teacher education programmes in Nigeria, and the scope of teacher education was discussed. The role of the teacher in national development, aims and objectives of teacher education and prospects for enhancing the effectiveness of teacher education programme were investigated. Issues and challenges for improvement were reviewed and recommendations made for policy formulation and proper implementation at regional, state and federal levels of government. Policy makers will be expected to work alongside educators, education services providers, and the leadership in all the educational institutions to bring about the desired change in teacher education. All stakeholders must be well-informed of their respective roles and supported at every stage in order for the teacher education programmes to achieve full success. Adequate funding from the government remains one of the driving forces required for mobilizing the qualified workforce needed for the realization of the government agenda for the education sector.

**Keywords:** Teachers, teacher education, education sector, teaching effectiveness, national development

### 1. Introduction

The spinal cord of every educational system at every level is the teacher. When the teacher becomes broken, education becomes derelict and broken too. In spite of the rapid advance in technology, and the use of the computer in education and the various applications of the technology in education, the teacher is still not replaceable at any level in the educational system. It is very clear and not deniable that education at every level still depends heavily on teachers for the propagation and the dissemination of knowledge. The work of the teacher includes maintaining and improving educational standards, teaching the educational content stipulated by the Education Ministry to the students at the right level. The teachers deliver to the needs of the society, thereby supporting the national education policy and ensuring that the both the content and context meet the expectations of the nation. Teachers remain instrumental in teaching and transmitting the culture of the people. It is beyond reasonable doubt that the curriculum and syllabus are not worth more than paper without the teacher who is expected to translate the content into action, activities, practice and goals. The best curriculum could be ruined by an apathetic teacher while the worst curriculum could be made useful and productive by highly, skilled, motivated, dedicated, committed, willing, enthusiastic and inspiring teacher. Students make up the class but the teacher makes the learning and education possible and accessible.

### 2. Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher Education is a process whereby both academic and professional competences are put together for training people to become professionally qualified teachers. The teacher education process may consist of two aspects, namely vertical or horizontal. The vertical aspect of teacher education has to do with the organizational components of teacher education while the horizontal aspect deals with the major areas of teacher education, such as liberal education and component, subject and components, professional education and component (Oyebamiji, 2002). Oyekan, (2000) asserts that teacher education should be basically related to every phase of development. Notwithstanding, be it in the social economics or political sphere of activities, one is faced with the recurring problem of the need for trained manpower. In fact, no adequate training can take place without it being

**Correspondence:**  
**Bright Chima Megbo**  
Academic Planning Unit,  
Federal University Wukari,  
Nigeria

handled by a competent teacher.

If teaching is a profession which stimulates the development of mental, physical and emotional powers of students, then trainee teachers should be given time and opportunity to reflect on the teacher's work. This should include reflecting on their teaching tasks and other professional practices related to the job, in order to improve upon how to deliver good lessons. Teaching is much more than applying a method to do a job. It requires that the trainee teacher be provided sufficient professional education and training as well as motivation, satisfactory remuneration package, and conducive working conditions. This according to Oyekan (1994) will make them imbibe self-concept, diligence, honesty and commitment to the teaching profession as a vehicle of continuous human engineering.

### 3. Types of Teacher Education in Nigeria

There are three different types of teacher education programmes in Nigeria. The scopes of teacher education are meant to provide the professional competence and confidence to render quality teaching service to Nigerian pupils for national development. Based on their training and certification level, they are:

- i. Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) programme
- ii. Bachelor's Degree in Education programme and;
- iii. Postgraduate Degree in Education programme.

### 4. The Roles of the Teacher in National Development

The concept of "National Development" can be described in terms of growth or advancement in all ramifications of life, including advancement in all areas of our social, economic and political life. Ukeje (1999) opines that development encourages experience, experimentation, rationality, creativity, industry and above all, self-reliance. Development incorporates education for the future, hope, initiative, integrity, morality, hard work, modernization, etc.

Teachers are the most important refined human species that skillfully identify, develop and nurture the potentials of productive citizenry for meaningful creation of wealth, pleasure and services which will sustain the quality of life (Oyebamiji, 2002). It is worthy of note that the relevance of teachers to individual and national development is wholly dependents on their perceived role in providing functional education and training to the learners within and outside the school setting. Production of efficient educated professionals such as Doctors, Nurses, Pharmacists, Engineers, Technicians, Agricultural officers, Managers of business, Officers of the armed forces, Politicians, Lawyers and other enlightened citizens are the fruitful efforts and commitments of teachers from the education sector (Oyekan, 2000).

The teachers are the potent agents of human engineering and survival for the attainment of national objectives, while education serves as instrument per-excellent. Ipaye (2002) opines that among other things, the teacher imparts knowledge, helps the learner to acquire skills, and some technical know-how. The teacher transmits the culture and serves as agent for getting students imbibe societal values and needed attitudes. He does these through a variety of ways, all of which are intertwined. The teacher also motivates his learners and makes them willing to learn and develop interest in education. Professionally competent teachers explore, illustrate, develop students' thinking via asking appropriate and thought-provoking questions, etc. to enable learners to learn effectively. These varieties of

activities are carried out by the teacher in order to develop the minds of learner, assist them to develop ideas, gain and gather information, and cultivate culturally acceptable attitudes with a view of producing well balanced personalities.

Alonge (1999) is of the view that Nigerian teachers of today are progressively becoming less productive. Nowadays, in many Nigerian schools, it is very disappointing to observe that when students resume after vacation many schools don't start teaching until after the midterm break. In recent times, a large number of teachers are more devoted in social activities than their jobs. It is very sad to note that many teachers in the various institution of learning in Nigeria have been displaying and apathy to teaching. The problem is even compounded at the tertiary institution, where the majority of lecturers are keen on selling teaching materials in form of handouts rather than teaching the students and giving them lecturer notes without payment. Our current education system has not been able to provide effective solution to the nation's socio-economic problems because it has failed to be functional. Currently, the Nigerian education system has not accorded priority to Science/Technology and Mathematics (STM) in our school and colleges. Another factor militating against effective national development is poor management of schools and indiscriminate transfer of teachers from one school to another.

### 5. Aims and Objectives of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education in Nigeria is directed to achieve the following objectives as it is enshrined in the National Policy on Education (N.P.E) of 1989 (revised).

- (1) The inculcating of national consciousness and national unity
- (2) The inculcating the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the Nigeria society
- (3) The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around and of the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in his society.

Teacher education component of the new policy as identified by Tella, *et al.* (1991) was geared toward producing the following;

- (a) Highly motivated, conscious and efficient classroom teachers for all the levels of our education system.
- (b) To encourage further the spirit of enquiring and creativity in teachers
- (c) To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives
- (d) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation world wider; and
- (e) To enhance teachers commitment to the teaching profession. All hands should be on deck by the teachers to see the actualization of the above objectives for the improvement of teaching as a profession.

### 6. Evolution of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Some of the efforts made towards achieving the aims and objective of Teacher Education are listed below;

- (I) The establishment of various teacher education institutions:
  - a. Grade II Teachers College

- b. Institute of Education
  - c. National Teachers Institute
  - d. Teachers Centers (NPE, 1998)
- (II) Some universities run teacher training programs ranging from N.C.E, Diploma, through Bachelor's degree to Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Presently, there are many Federal and State Colleges of Education as well as Private College of Education programme offering teacher education programmes in Nigeria.
- (III) The establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE). This commission which was established in 1989 was able to publish minimum standard for the training of NCE teacher training programme, provide accreditation manual for accreditation of all projects, implementation guide to enable the commission monitor effectively all their capital projects at Federal College of Education (NCCE, 1996).

Another effort made toward achieving the goals and objective of Teacher Education was that level II and level III Teacher were upgraded and unqualified teachers enrolled for higher degrees, Aliyu (1998).

The declaration of teaching as an essential service, known as 'Teaching Essential Service Decree', was promulgated in May, 1993 by the then Federal Military Government. Even though the Decree was meant to force the then striking lecturers back to classroom, it has given teaching a legislative service in the country (FMG, 1993). The government made a provision for special grants for research and development. Teachers were able to engage in various researches which could improve the effectiveness of teaching. Also, conferences, workshop and seminars were frequently organized to keep professional teachers abreast of new development in the field. Sandwich programmes were introduced and the curriculum of Teachers College was restructured. All these steps were taken to enhance the effectiveness of teacher education programme in the country.

## 7. Bottlenecks to the Enhancement of Effective Teacher Education Programme

The first salient problem which affects the enhancement of teacher education in Nigeria is the professionalization of teaching.

Olokede (2005) defined teaching as the out of imparting knowledge and skills to another. Teaching is giving instruction to another to facilitate learning. In the opinion of Odediran (1999), the profession must have certain criteria like performance of social services, founded upon systematic body of knowledge. The professional code ethics gives autonomy and provides in-service and professional growth. The barriers to the advancement of teaching as a profession in Nigeria include lack of academic confidence, absence of life commitment to the profession, poor salary and fringe benefits, late payment of teachers' salaries, negative perception of the teacher by the public, etc. Olokede (2005) posited that teaching lack freedom of practice which is one of the features of anything to be called a profession. It practically becomes difficult for teachers to open school of their own in which they can practice on their own.

Graduate in other areas likes B.A or BSc Single Honors cannot jump into law or medicine as the case is with teaching, where they can go back to the university for a Postgraduate Diploma in education in education to become teachers. Recognizing the above issue in relation to the

employment of teachers, the federal government gave a directive that the minimum educational qualification for becoming a teacher in primary schools, as application in the National Policy on Education, should be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

It was a welcome idea directed towards promoting the development of teacher education in Nigeria and it was an attempt to elevate teaching to a noble profession. In the nearest future, first degree in education may be the least qualification for teachers to teach at the least level of education. In practice, NCE holders are still teaching in most of the Nigeria secondary schools. All hand should be on desk for the realization of the opinion/decision of the federal government.

## 7.1. Issues and Challenges for Improvement in Teacher Education

There is growing insecurity in the teaching profession, especially in relation to issues arising from students' indiscipline, drug abuse, cultism, examination malpractice and increasing militancy among students. Education staff, from Gardeners and Drivers to Lecturers, even Provosts or Vice Chancellor could be insulted, assaulted or injured in Nigerian institutions by disrespectful students. Definitely, this is not the kind of culture Nigerian student should exhibit, especially in educational institutions (Ibukun, 2002). This situation obviously suggests that the education system in Nigeria is in crisis. The reasons for the rough atmosphere are not far-fetched as it has been observed that the potential burdens of teachers in schools and educators in higher institutions have increased due to growing national population and induced demand for learning in Nigeria. Yet there has been an obvious downturn in Nigeria economy from the 1980's, the crisis of resources in the management of teacher education in the country is a reality in the 1990's and have spilt over well into the present time.

It is imperative to mention that until Nigeria as a nation rightly evaluates the practical problems hampering improvement of the education system and fervently seeks lasting solutions to them and it will difficult to establish and sustain quality education system in the country. At present, the moral standards in the teachers are regrettable low. Quantitative education in form of expansion is not bad in itself, but government and the private education providers should be ready to pay for high quality and standards. Perhaps, there may be an element of goodness in old grammar school and the college system which is currently undervalued today. This could render some solution rather than the poor atmosphere of discipline in the schools today. The current challenges for teachers in Nigeria include the following:

- (a) Ensure that the teachers have an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding of all the subjects they supposed to teach;
- (b) Having a higher level of knowledge and understanding in one academic discipline;
- (c) Must be computer literate to be able to function effectively in the information technology age;
- (d) Must be an educationist with sound knowledge of child growth and development, measurement, teaching strategies and methodologies;
- (e) Must possess a good leadership quality, counseling quality, quality of good tutor, and qualities of good manager (Abiona, 2001, Alonge 1999, and Ukeje, 1999)

The secondary school teachers must be adequately prepared to face the challenges of the age. Such a teacher must be knowledgeable and teaching strategies. He must at least obtain a first degree with teaching qualification before being allowed to teach in the secondary school. He/she must understand and appreciate the vision of the Nigeria nation (Ukeje, 1999).

The teacher education programme requires a proper balance between the academic and professional components. The effectiveness of the education system and enterprise depends on the training. The effectiveness of teachers greatly hinges on the quality of the teacher training programme they had undergone, their personalities, competencies and devotion to duty. The realization of the potentialities of education as a veritable instrument for social change and nation reconstruction depend largely on the teachers. It is undeniable that teachers are the most crucial and professional group for national development and the nation reconstruction. If the government does not address the burning issues of poor teacher training, continuous professional development for teachers and teachers' welfare, the education system in the country will surely suffer, even unborn generations may suffer the consequences. Teachers' lack of commitment to the profession due to poor conditions of service for teachers can be more debilitating and devastating to future generation than in any other professions (Ukeje, 1999).

Odediran (1999) postulated that it is a national suicide for any nation either by accident or by design to allow its best brains to cure its sick, design all its road and bridges, formulate and administered its laws while allow the poorest brains teach its youth. It takes good and dedicated teachers to produce efficient doctors, competent lawyers, and engineers. Therefore, the education and the training of the teacher particularly for the challenges should be an issue for serious national consideration and attention.

Hitherto, teaching in Nigeria has become the last hope of the hopeless. For trainee teachers, the teacher education programme is seen as a last resort of finding a job at the slightest opportunity. In the near future, with the concerted efforts of the current administration under President Goodluck Jonathan, the teachers and other educators are likely to have smiles on their faces. The current administration is heavily investing in education and lecturers' welfare services. Therefore, as a matter of personal integrity the teachers should self-assess themselves to ascertain whether they possess the attributes such as competence, decisiveness, energy, enthusiasm, initiative, etc. which are needed for success in the profession. All stakeholders, especially the policy and decision makers must tackle the issues impeding teachers' success, and make teaching in Nigeria a real noble profession capable of attracting and retaining the best brain. Teacher education should last for not less than five years and the professional component should equally be strengthened.

The entire teacher education programme should be competence-based. The present programme experience-based if a trainee teacher is able to show proof of experience in specific areas under our so called Minimum Standards Requirement, and has undergone some form of Teaching Practice (TP) experience, then he is ready to teach" (Ukeje, 1999). Such an experience may be superficial and transitory – it is merely an experience to obtain a certificate. In contrast, in the competency-based teacher education

programmes, the performance is the most important, not just paper qualification. The student teacher must either be able to consistently demonstrate his ability to promote desirable learning or exhibit continuously specific competencies/behaviours required for the job. He must not just pass a set of prescribed teacher education courses but must also attain a level of competence which would enable him to perform consistently all the essential task of teaching. All our teacher education institution should, therefore, be held responsible for the production of disciplined, dedicated, efficient and effective teachers. The programme should be result-oriented. Teachers and lecturers must be academically sound and professionally competent. The teacher education programme must be properly planned, well organized and implemented under a complete professional atmosphere and environment like all other professions to be fruitful. Professional ethics and decorum are better developed under cooperative and collaborative learning environment, therefore all new entrants to the profession and experienced colleagues must work together to promote the noble cause by upholding the principles and practice of the education profession.

### **8. Recommendation**

In view of the apparent ignorance of many youths about teacher education, personality maladjustments among the students, career officers and counselors should be appointed in all Nigerian primary and secondary schools. The concept of teacher education and national development should infiltrate into various levels of education in Nigeria. All key stakeholders should be actively involved in the process of improving the standard of teacher education programme. While government should step up efforts geared towards improving the standards in the teaching profession, teachers and other educators should be more committed and dedicated in discharging their duties in order to achieve the aims and objectives of establishing the teacher education programmes in Nigeria.

### **9. Conclusion**

The school is an extension of the home and teachers are seen as the in-loco-parent of the learners. Teachers are expected to bridge the gap between the school and the society for the promotion of moral standards. Production of quality graduates will help develop the manpower for the country. Increased job opportunities will promote high standard of living within the community and enhance the chances of the citizenry to effectively contribute to national development. The validity of any education system depends on the quality of teaching and the availability of competent teachers.

The issue of poor education standards is compounded in Nigeria because of the political, economic, social and cultural syndromes of underdevelopment. At present, the government and private education sector in the country is more interested in achieving quantitative expansion of schools and higher institutions at the expense of good quality teachers, lecturers, adequate physical planning and equipment. The Nigerian teacher education programme must break new grounds in the area of making it a model, attractive and more professional one. If the programme is effectively launched, implemented and managed, it may bring about a measurable positive change that will attract both new entrants and experienced educators to remain in the profession and enhance national development.

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