



REFOCUSING TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA FOR GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES: ISSUES, CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

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Abstract:

The paper highlighted some of the issues and challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria. These include: Government's neglect of the education sector, poor funding and shortage of qualified teachers to meet the manpower needs at all levels of the educational system in Nigeria. The paper also highlighted some global best practices in countries like Finland, Canada, Singapore and Australia. The paper recommended that a conscious and conscientious effort needs to be made to refocus teacher education in Nigeria. Teacher education policies need to be implemented in practical terms to provide highly motivated, conscientious, and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education in Nigeria. The paper strongly advocated for a holistic teacher education programme in Nigeria, in line with global best practices.

Keywords: teacher education, global best practices, challenges, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Teacher Education the world over is regarded as an important tool for achieving national objectives. In Nigeria, the Federal Government has adopted education as an instrument for promoting national development. Education is the engine that drives the development of any nation. Education is an instrument of change and development.

Teachers are the pillars of educational development in all countries all over the world. In fact, no nation can boast of a strong and effective system without the continuous development of its teachers.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy on Education asserted that no nation can achieve economic, social and technological progress and self-sufficiency without a good system of education to sustain its achievements. It further stressed that government will continue to give major emphasis to education and all matters of educational development. Teachers, therefore, have an important part to play

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in making the government achieve these objectives. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for the implementation of the policy at any stage. Thus, it is imperative to invest in the preparation of teachers so that the future of a nation is secured.

1.1 Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education refers to policies and procedures aimed at providing prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and skills they will need to perform their duties effectively in the classroom, school, and community (Yusuf, Afolabi & Oyetayo, 2014). Teacher education can also be defined as a programme of education, research, and training for people who want to teach at all levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education (Westbrook, et al., 2013; Akindutire & Ekundayo, 2012). It is a programme aimed at improving teacher proficiency and competence in order to enable and empower teachers to meet the demands of their profession and face the challenges that they encounter. Teacher education is often divided into three stages: initial teacher training/education, induction, and teacher development or continuing professional development (Yusuf, 2012a; Ronald, 2009). Although it should ideally be conceived of and organized as a seamless continuum, it is often divided into these stages.

Initial teacher training/education encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills (Ronald, 2009). Teachers will benefit from an induction programme that includes mentoring and is designed to provide support, guidance, and orientation to new teachers as they begin their careers in the classroom. These programmes assist new teachers in their first year of teaching by encouraging ongoing dialogue and collaboration among teachers, which improves the effectiveness of new teachers and improves students' achievements.

It is critical to conduct an orientation programme (induction) for new teachers prior to the start of the instructional term, which should be supervised by the mentor teacher; the mentor observation of the beginning teacher's classroom teaching skills; and weekly meetings between the mentor and the beginning teacher to discuss the beginning teacher's performance and any needed improvements should be prioritized (Fareo, 2013). Teacher development, also known as continuing professional development, refers to activities that improve a teacher's skills, knowledge, expertise, and other characteristics (Yusuf, & Dada, 2016; Jekayinfa, 2000). It is important to remember that development can come in a variety of forms, from formal to informal. It can be made available through external expertise in the form of courses, workshops, or formal qualification programmes, a collaboration between schools or teachers across schools (e.g. observational visits to other schools or teacher networks), or collaboration within the schools where teachers work. In this last case, development can be provided through coaching/mentoring, collaborative planning and teaching, and the sharing of good practices.

If teacher preparation was to meet global best practices and have a positive impact on the quality of curriculum transaction in classrooms, as well as pupil learning and larger social transformation, the focus of teacher preparation has to shift from training to

education. The aspects that need greater emphasis are; the length of academic preparation, the level and quality of subject matter knowledge, the repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers possess to meet the needs of diverse learning situations, the degree of commitment to the profession, sensitivity to contemporary issues and problems and the level of motivation. This would be impossible if teacher preparation was solely focused on training because holistic teacher development is required, teacher education must take precedence over mere training.

2. Overview of Teacher Education in Nigeria

The teacher is the most important element in any educational programme. He/she plays a central role in the implementation of the educational process. The level of learner's achievement is determined by teacher competence. In a similar vein, the quality of education basically depends on the quality of teachers.

The National Teacher Education Policy (2014; 46) states the objectives of teacher education as follows:

- a) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- b) To encourage further, the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- c) To help teachers 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 intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation, not only in the life of their country but in the wider world; and
- e) To enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession FRN.
- f) To produce knowledgeable and effective teachers who can inspire persons to learn. (FRN, 2014;46)

Achieving the objectives of teacher education involves an interplay of complex variables. However, educational practitioners (Yusuf, 2020; Butu, Madu & Hassan, 2012; Durosaro, 2006), on the other hand, have noted that these ambitious objectives have not been met. The critical matters for consideration include:

- a) The quality of the entrants into colleges of education, their entry behaviour and their interest in teaching as a career.
- b) The programmes of study, their breadth and depth, their relevance and their mix in producing the desired professional teacher of a type;
- c) The quality and quantity of the tutorial staff, their resilience and competence in turning their students into their own masters; a necessary provision that every teacher educator must himself be a professional teacher.
- d) The adequacy of teaching materials, infrastructural facilities and essential services including library, transport and medical services;
- e) The leadership of an institution particularly its mission and vision as these affect planning for efficiency, planning for effectiveness and planning for the satisfaction

of staff, students and the society; the critical challenge for institutional leadership relates to the organization of resources (human, financial, material, time and space) and the management of information and conflict; and

- f) The practicum: The practical teaching programme has been recognized as the most visible aspect of the teacher education programme that leads to professionalization. Therefore, sufficient emphasis should always be given to teaching practice starting from micro-teaching sessions at the institution centre for educational Technology (CET) and proceeding to practice in real classroom situations in the schools.

Teacher education curricula have witnessed many changes in teacher preparation programmes in various universities and institutions in the country. During the last decade, a new thrust has been posed due to rapid changes in the educational, political, social and economic contexts at the national and international levels. Curriculum reconstruction has also become imperative in the light of some perceptible gaps in teacher education. Teacher education, by and large, is conventional in its nature and purpose. The integration of theory and practice and consequent curricular response to the requirements of the school system still remains inadequate. Teachers are prepared in competencies and skills which do not necessarily equip them for becoming professionally effective. Their familiarities with the latest educational developments remain insufficient. Organized and stimulatory learning experiences whenever available, rarely contribute to enhancing teachers' capacities for self-directed lifelong learning. The system still prepares teachers who do not necessarily become professionally competent and committed at the completion of initial teacher preparation programmes. A large number of teacher training institutions do not practice what they preach. Several of the skills acquired and the methodologies learnt are seldom practiced or used in the actual school system. This highlights the need to bring realism and dynamism to the curriculum (Yusuf, 2016; 2020). This brings me to the following issues:

2.1 What Is to Be Taught?

What Is to Be Taught to pre-service teachers, that is, teacher education curriculum? The prime aim of the curriculum for teacher education should be to produce highly motivated, creative, innovative and efficient classroom teachers that are socially relevant to an egalitarian society. It is envisaged that such teachers would serve as guides, facilitators and providers of knowledge and multiple resources. Based on the conceptualization that teaching and learning are partner processes, the programme for producing such competency-based and performance-based teachers must structurally have three components, vis; general education, specialized knowledge and practice.

- a) General Education consists of a broad background in the mainstreams of human knowledge-the humanities, social science, the natural sciences and the language arts. These are intended to bridge the gaps in human knowledge and enhance communication.

- b) Specialized knowledge of two types: (1) the knowledge of teaching subjects and (2) pedagogical knowledge or professional studies.
- c) The practicum-a minimum of 12 months of supervised teaching practice after initial attempts in micro-teaching laboratories is proposed. Furthermore, every prospective teacher of technical or vocational subjects shall have an additional, industrial attachment experience of at least 6 months.

It should be emphasized that the NCCE minimum standards for preparing NCE teachers are designed with the intent to achieve the foregoing three components of teacher education structure.

2.2 How Are Teachers Prepared?

Based on a philosophical standpoint, the Nigerian teacher education programmes should strive to strike a balance between subject matter content and pedagogy, on the one hand, and between theory and practice on the other. Flexibility in methods of instruction should be encouraged. Creativity and critical thinking should permeate our teacher education programme.

2.3 What Competences Are Expected?

The professional teacher must be competent to teach the subject he has been trained to teach at the appropriate level. The facilities in the teacher training institution for initial teacher training (ITT) should be expanded and updated to enable appropriate training to be given. Such training facilities will provide for adequate initial training and upward movement in the profession for teacher competence, the following should be provided:

- a) Subject matter- appropriate and relevant knowledge of facts principles and concepts needed to sustain the cognitive development of the students.
- b) Pedagogy- exposure to and experience in principles and practice of education and in the art of teaching as an aid to meaningful learning.
- c) Skill processes- facilities for the development and acquisition of appropriate manipulative, communication and other skills in students.
- d) Resourcefulness- improvisation of teaching aids.
- e) Behaviour motivation- use of reinforcements, modifications therapy, guidance and counselling, feedback etc.
- f) Evaluation- self and student evaluation through appropriate construction of tests, their analyses and inferences.

3. Situation of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Recent studies (Yusuf & Dada, 2016, Yusuf & El Yakub, 2020;) have shown that a number of significant areas of concern would have to be seriously addressed if teacher education is to contribute meaningfully to achieving the goals of the National Policy on Education (NPE). These areas include:

- a) The need for up-dating of recruitment, admissions and graduation requirements.

- b) Incentives and measures for attracting talents into the teaching profession.
- c) Primary Studies Teacher Education course content in NCE and university undergraduate programmes that fall below the requirements of today's knowledge economy.
- d) Inadequate coverage and inadequate mastery of content knowledge in 'teaching subjects', especially in languages, science, mathematics and technology.
- e) The prevalence of memorization-regurgitation due to the predominance of the lecture method of teaching.
- f) Inadequacy and inappropriateness of teaching and learning materials, and
- g) Low level of IT penetration and utilization in an IT-dominated era. (Nigeria Teacher Education Policy, 2014)

In teacher education and more especially in the degree programmes, the duration of practical teaching is unacceptably short. Little or no time is devoted to classroom observation prior to teaching practice. The quality of lesson preparation and delivery by student teachers is abysmally low. The quality of supervision of student teachers on teaching practice leaves much to be desired; while there is no formal induction exercise for student teachers prior to their involvement in teaching practice.

A good number of institutions for teacher education operate with dilapidated infrastructure and furniture; overcrowded lecture halls and insufficient equipment and materials e.g. library and laboratory materials, computer). There is also little or no student support in terms of scholarships, medical care and counselling services. (Yusuf & Dada, 2016, Yusuf & El Yakub, 2020)

Lecturer selection for Colleges of Education (COEs) was generally considered as not being sufficiently rigorous. Lecturers were found to be inadequately prepared to teach in the areas to which they are assigned; especially Primary Education Studies (PES). Worse still, lecturers have very limited opportunities for continuous professional and academic development.

There are limited attempts to systematically link In-Service Teacher Education (ISTE) Programmes closely to learning needs and workplace challenges which consist primarily of programmes. To provide for upgrading or certification through distance and "sandwich" courses. Systematic professional development programmes for teachers at the post-basic level are few and far between. Funding has remained a perpetual challenge, while monitoring and evaluation of teacher education programmes are not what they ought to be.

4. Issues/Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria

Despite the numerous recommendations and reforms over the years, aimed at repositioning teacher education in the country for optimal performance, Nigerian teacher education faces numerous challenges. The major problem of teachers in Nigeria is the fact that teachers being trained now are not sufficiently prepared in order to meet the complex demand of the teaching process in the country as regards the schools and colleges. The

unqualified teachers could at best be warming the classrooms and keeping the children busy doing nothing.

The results of a personnel audit conducted by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in 2021 revealed a significant shortage of qualified teachers at the primary level in both public and private schools in Nigeria. According to the report, 277,537 qualified teachers are needed to fill existing gaps at the primary level of education. The report also revealed that 73% of teachers in public schools are qualified, while only 53% of teachers in private schools are qualified to teach at the primary level (UBEC, 2021). To a large extent, the shortage of qualified teachers required at the primary level reflects decades of neglect of the teaching profession in Nigeria. The lack of qualified teachers at the primary level is a major setback in the effort to reposition the teaching profession and make it more effective in meeting Nigerian's educational needs.

Another problem is the Government's neglect of the education sector, particularly as it relates to keeping up with emerging realities such as Nigeria's growing population, education demand and needs, and matching the supply of education services and facilities. Inadequate funding in the education sector has been a major issue for the industry. It is no longer an exaggeration to say that the Nigerian government has failed to meet the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommendations for allocating 26% of the total budgetary allocation to education over the years. The gross underfunding is a setback to the sector in terms of curriculum implementation.

Another major challenge in teacher education in Nigeria today is the lack of interest among secondary school graduates in the teaching profession, owing to the negative image that teachers have in society (Butu, Madu & Hassan, 2012). The low status of teachers in the country discourages students from enrolling in teacher education programmes, and those who do enrol do so because they have no other option. Currently, it appears that the Nigerian system encourages the reservation of intellectually and financially disadvantaged students for teaching careers. Furthermore, most teachers are dissatisfied with their jobs for a variety of reasons, including low pay, delayed salary payments, and a lack of job satisfaction. These factors all play a role in teachers' apparent lack of enthusiasm and commitment to their profession. Lack of commitment manifests itself in a variety of ways, including a lack of enthusiasm for work, a lack of concern for co-curricular and extracurricular activities, insufficient lesson preparation, failure to write lesson notes, and careless handling of statutory records, to name a few.

In Nigeria, policies change frequently with almost every change in leadership. These inconsistencies in educational policies pose a threat to the delivery of high-quality teacher education. The abysmal low performance of teachers' graduates from Nigerian institutions of higher learning is partly due to poor quality delivery. Policies are written by knowledgeable writers who have the foresight and believe strongly in what they write for the future, but when it comes to putting theory into practice, problems arise. Similarly, the conditions of service for teachers in Nigerian schools are insufficient to attract and retain the best minds. As a result of the declining attraction to teaching hence, the

dwindling enrolment in teacher education programmes, those who remain in the profession maintain a low social status with the accompanying emotional discomfort.

Another issue confronting teacher education in Nigeria is a lack of understanding of how to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Owolabi, Oyewole & Oke, 2013, Alasoluyi, 2021). All teachers must be familiar with and use computer technology as well as the internet in order for the system and its products to remain relevant in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, a large number of untrained and half-baked personnel remain in the system, resulting in many Nigerian teachers failing to meet the minimum global standard. Given the fact that education remains a critical component in producing a healthy and prosperous nation, this has obvious socio-political and economic implications.

Furthermore, the politicization of appointment into leadership positions in education institutions, where individuals with no background in education (as a result of ethnic, religious, political, and regional affiliations) are appointed or selected as heads of education and related institutions, is a major challenge affecting teacher education in Nigeria. Such misfit appointments will inevitably affect teacher education. Finally, perceived corruption in the system, in which funds intended for the education sector are misappropriated or diverted for personal and other purposes, depriving the education sector of the funds it requires to carry out its projects/programmes, is a constraint affecting teacher education in Nigeria.

5. Global Best Practices: The Case of Finland, Canada, Singapore, Australia

Many researchers have sought to identify the characteristics of ideal teachers over the last decade (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Bohn, Roehrig & Pressley, 2004), they all point to a balance of teaching aptitude and attitude – a formula that holds true across countries.

5.1 Teacher Education in Canada

Canada supports teaching and requires all public-school teachers to complete a professional programme of university-based training at one of a limited number of teacher education institutions. There are around 50 teacher education programmes in Canada, making quality control easier for provincial governments. Teachers college applicants are in the top 30% of their college cohorts (OECD, 2011).

Across a 12-year wage grid, teachers in Ontario are paid between \$42,000 and \$92,000 (CD) (roughly \$32,000 - \$69,000 USD). In 2014, a new teacher with five years of university education (a degree plus a teaching certificate) earned between \$45,709 and \$58,436 (CD) (about \$34,500 - \$44,100 USD) (Tan, 2015). Furthermore, teachers with more than ten years of service received between \$76,021 and \$97,605 (CD) (about \$57,400 - \$73,700 USD) (Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, cited in Tan, 2015). On the basis of performance, compensation packages are built to ensure that the best teachers advance up the salary ladder. Teachers are frequently motivated by a combination of

financial and non-financial incentives. Performance and retention bonuses, as well as allowances for extra duties, are included in the package. Provisions are made for professional growth, postgraduate awards, and study leave options. These factors promote real growth and retention.

5.2 Teacher Education in Australia

In Australia, the preparation of teachers for all pre-primary, primary and most secondary schools is carried out by Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE's) which are comparable, by all standards with our Colleges of Education. The CAEs in Australia have full autonomy to provide their own degree and diploma courses.

Only candidates with full secondary education are admitted into the NCE course for 3 years after which a further 2 years in a College of Education qualifies such candidates for a degree. Direct admission to the university for a 4-year degree programme in education includes 12 months of practice teaching spread over the period of the training. The curriculum for the training of professional teachers emphasizes both content and pedagogy. On qualifying as a professional teacher with NCE or post-graduate diploma in education or B.Ed., a provisional registration as a teacher is required for at least one year. During this one-year probation, teaching is under the supervision of a registered professional teacher at the end of which the teacher writes a report of his experience. This together with a report from the supervisor should serve as the basis for the full registration of the teacher. The teacher Registration Council may, however, have its own additional criteria for the registration of teachers.

5.3 Teacher Education in Finland

In Finland, teachers are highly respected and supported. Finland has put in place an equitable high-quality education system by creating a sophisticated profession of teaching in which all teachers hold at least a 2 years master's degree that encompasses strong subject matter, and pedagogical preparation and integrates research and practice. Teaching has become the most sought-after profession after medicine and many teachers pursue a PhD and then remain in teaching. Finland leapt from a relatively poorly educated nation to a 21st-century powerhouse with a current literacy rate of 96%. The finish view is that teaching should be a long-term profession where people can grow into leadership positions and develop expertise over time. Finland is well praised for its exceptionally strict admissions process, which is designed to sieve out students with the best possible aptitude and attitude for teaching. In terms of selectivity, it is well known that Finland's university teacher education programmes are extremely competitive, with one out of every ten qualified applicants for primary school teaching (the most prestigious and in-demand programme) and 5,000 out of 20,000 qualified applicants across all educational levels. Tampere University, for example, accepted 214 of the 3,609 applicants who applied in 2020. Finland's admissions have gotten more difficult in the previous decade and a half, with over 5,000 candidates for just under 938 spaces available

in primary school teacher education programmes in 2010. The number of applicants has risen to almost 9,000 by 2021, with around the same number of vacant spots.

In Finland, there are two stages to the admissions process. Candidates must first complete a nationally administered standardized entrance exam that includes a variety of psychometric exams. Aspects of pedagogy are also covered in the admission exam. Candidates are invited to the next phase of selection given the results of the first stage. The universities that offer teacher education programmes administer the second stage at their discretion. An observed simulation activity in which a small group of applicants conduct themselves in simulated classroom situations to determine their aptitude and skills for teaching, such as interpersonal and problem-solving skills; and an interview with university faculty in which their understanding of educational issues, interest in teaching, and other factors are assessed are common features of the second stage.

Furthermore, remuneration and other related incentives are critical not just for attracting and hiring potential teachers, but also for maintaining and inspiring current teachers to work at even greater levels in the long run. The pool of potential teachers is *"affected by some combination of occupational position, work environment, sense of personal contribution, and financial benefits and incentives"*. (Schleicher, 2012).

5.4 Teacher Education in Singapore

Singapore shifted from just getting teachers – a key goal during the period of the massive growth of its education system after independence in 1965 to providing teachers of quality.

In 1997, the thinking schools learning Nation reform explicitly redefined the role of teachers. As Prime Minister Gok proclaimed *"Every school must be a model learning organization. Teachers and principals will constantly look out for new ideas and practices and continuously refresh their own knowledge. Teaching will itself be a learning profession of the future."*

This reform has fuelled changes in recruitment, preparation, compensation, status and the professional development of teachers. In Singapore standards for admission to teacher preparation programmes are stringent and they include strong demonstrated ability and passion to teach. Candidates' preparation at the graduate level is fully paid for by the government with a salary while they undergo training. Recruits are hired when they begin training and are guaranteed employment. Teacher preparation is well designed and offered only by the National Institute of Education. It is followed by strong induction and professional development. Compensation is high relative to other professions.

Singapore's framework is the belief that the learner is the centre of our teacher education mission. This framework is premised along three value paradigms: learner-centeredness, teacher identity and service to the profession and the community. Learner-centeredness puts the learner at the heart of teachers' work while the paradigm of teacher identity outlines the clear attributes the teacher must possess in order to bring about strong learning outcomes in a rapidly changing world. Service to the profession and the

community spells out teachers' commitment to their profession through active collaborations with members of the fraternity and striving to be better practitioners with a view of benefitting the community as a whole. Finally, the skills and knowledge spelt out in this framework refer to key skills and knowledge competencies that 21st-century teaching professionals require in order to bring about 21st-century literacies and learning outcomes.

6. Refocusing Teacher Education in Nigeria for Global Best Practices

There is a need for the Federal, State and relevant institutions to:

- Recruit highly able candidates into high-quality programmes by ensuring competitive salaries, financial subsidies for training and greater commonality in the design and quality of preparation as in the case of Finland, Singapore, Canada and Australia.
- Connect theory and practice through both the design of thoughtful coursework and the integration of high-quality clinical work in settings where good practice is supported. Programmes in Finland as well as a growing number of institutions in Canada, Australia and the United States have created new models for student teaching, often in 'training schools' or professional development schools.
- Use professional teaching standards to focus attention on the learning and evaluation of critical knowledge, skills and disposition as illustrated in the United States, Australia, Canada and Singapore.
- Take concrete steps to improve the remuneration package and conditions of service of primary and secondary teachers so as to make the teaching profession and teacher education attractive to potential candidates.
- Design and implement a very attractive and realistic incentive package for students enrolled in teacher education programmes.
- Design a Federal-State collaborative programme to motivate states to actively participate in the reform of teaching and teacher education. UBEC's model of supporting states to implement Universal Basic Education programme through the Federal Teacher's Scheme can be adopted to suit this purpose.
- Budgetary allocations to NCCE, NTI, the Colleges of Education, Faculties and Institutes of Education need to be significantly increased based on their needs and requirements.
- TETFUND should provide more financial support to the core activities of all institutions engaged in teacher education.
- The present administration has identified education as one of its top priorities and allocated N742.5 billion naira to the education sector in the 2021 budget. This is commendable and should be consistently increased on a yearly basis.
- There should be a more efficient use of resources, an increase in investment in education by strengthening institutions, promoting greater adoption of technology, building the capacities of teachers and mobilizing additional financial

resources through legal frameworks and deliberate intervention on a sustainable basis.

- The quality of the existing teaching force must be improved primarily through an extensive in-service training programme with incentive packages being built into the programme.
- Admission of candidates into education programmes should be based on merit and interest, oral/written examination and interviews.
- Government should ensure that unqualified teachers who are already in the teaching field are sponsored to obtain the required qualification for proper functioning in the teaching-learning process.
- Lecturers need to switch from the prevalence of lecture, the predominant method of instruction in the traditional classroom setting, to inquiry-based, constructivist methods (such as the guided discovery method), including online teaching, learning and research.
- Government should provide an ICT training programme for teacher educators with an incentive package. Unless teacher educators model effective use of technology, it will be impossible to produce a new generation of teachers to effectively deploy the new tool in the classroom. Thus, unless teacher education programme is redesigned to incorporate, in real terms, modern technologies of teaching/learning, our education system stands the risk of churning out learners who are neither critical thinkers nor problem solvers.
- Pedagogical Content Knowledge: Faculties from both art and science and education need to work together to ensure that teachers have both a deep understanding of subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) that would allow them to teach imaginatively and productively.
- Literacy and Numeracy Skills: The program should ensure that the teacher candidates acquire and demonstrate mastery of literacy and numeracy skills and that they are prepared to teach them, irrespective of the level at which they will be teaching.
- Academic Concentration of Primary and Secondary School Teachers: Attention needs to be paid to the question of an appropriate academic concentration for a candidate intending to become a primary school teacher and perhaps a secondary school teacher. This question should be addressed in a rigorous way with close attention to credible evidence from the research literature to ensure that primary school teachers learn the core structure of multiple disciplines and are prepared to teach content knowledge in a variety of subjects.
- Use of Technology: knowing how to evaluate and use new technologies to facilitate teaching and learning is an essential skill in the teacher's repertoire; therefore, teacher education programme needs to integrate instructions about technology throughout the curriculum.

8. Way Forward

The following are some suggestions for the way forward for teacher education in line with global best practices.

- a) Teaching should be recognized as an academically taught clinical-practice profession. This requires close cooperation between Colleges of Education and actual practicing schools, the appointment of master teachers as clinical Faculty in the Colleges of Education, and a two-year residency induction period for graduates of a teacher education programme, is strongly advocated.
- b) Teacher education programme should be guided by a respect for research, inquiry and data analysis. There should be a new emphasis on collecting reliable, valid and multiple measures of teacher education programme effectiveness in schools of education, including pupil-learning gains made under the tutelage of programme graduates and such evidence should be used for programme improvement.
- c) Curriculum development and review on a continuous basis should be encouraged to keep pace with current trends.
- d) UBEC/BESDA Model of Mentoring/Coaching, peer-tutoring, subject lead teachers and cluster lead teachers should be encouraged to provide professional support to teachers to improve their instruction. So far, 1367 master trainers and 3176 mentors/coaches have been trained in the BESDA programme.

9. Conclusion

A conscious and intentional effort needs to be made to refocus teacher education in Nigeria. Teacher education policy needs to be implemented in practical terms to provide highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system. The focus of teacher preparation must shift from mere training to education. A holistic teacher education programme is strongly advocated. The aspects that need greater emphasis include; the length of academic preparation, the level and quality of subject matter knowledge, the repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers possess to meet the needs of diverse learning situations, the degree of commitment to the profession, sensitivity to contemporary issues and the level of motivation. To achieve this, only willing, passionate and enthusiastic teachers should be admitted, trained and employed as teachers to avoid individuals using the profession as springboards or stepping stones toward getting better higher-paid jobs. For teacher education to get its pride of place in this democratic dispensation, there is the need to change the orientation of people as regards their perception of teachers and the teaching job. The salary and welfare packages of teachers should be enhanced handsomely.

Teacher education must be reinvigorated to an enviable position, above all other professions. Without teachers, there is no profession that can exist know Doctors,

Lawyers, Engineers, Architects etc. Teachers must fight to get the recognition they truly deserve, as no nation can rise above the standard of her teachers and citizens at large.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author hereby declare that this paper has not been published by any other Journal other than this one.

About the Author

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