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# **TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA AND TRAINING IN NIGERIA.**

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## **Abstract**

*The importance of teacher education is recognized worldwide because the teacher is the brain box of educational activities and the progress of educational institutional depends on the quality and competence of the teacher. The quality of teachers produced depends greatly on teacher education curricula and the quality of teacher education given to student teachers. Teacher education curricula contain prescribed academic contents, learning experiences, opportunities, and the methods of teaching in different areas of specialization. Any teacher education programme be it for initial or in-service teacher education which seeks to produce high quality teachers must recognize and provide for teachers' needs such as conceptual knowledge of the dynamics of social systems, and a broad understanding of teachers' role in relation to educational system and to national development. Thus, one of the most persistent problems facing Nigeria is that of improving the quality of her teacher education. This paper examines some of the identify issues in teacher education curricula and programmes. It also suggests the way forward towards transformation of teacher education in Nigeria.*

Nigeria's search for qualitative education could be linked to the extent of the nation's belief in education. Nigeria as a nation has very strong belief in education and relies on it as having in extricable relationship with national pride and development. Thus, the federal government has adopted "education in Nigeria as an instrument 'par excellence' for effecting national development". The nation has linked her belief in educational intimately with national development and tends to translate all her national problems, wants and aspirations to educational goals which can only be achieved by teachers. As much as Nigeria believes that education is the key that unlocks the door to national development, it could be said that the teacher holds the key to that door. Mkpa (2008) contended that the teacher is both the fulcrum on which everything revolves and

the key that unlocks the door of freedom from the chains of ignorance and dungeon. The nation can hardly achieve her aspiration for qualitative education at all levels without first giving the teachers the kind of education they need. This makes qualitative teacher education an imperative for national development.

Teacher education refers to professional education given to teachers to enable them develop the type of attitudes and the skills and knowledge required to make them teach effectively. It includes training and education that the receive before commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in- service or no- the -job). Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) opined that teacher education is the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period for the preparation of individuals who intends to develop productive citizens. It is informed by the fact that teaching is an all- purpose profession which stimulus the development of mental, physical and emotional powers of students. Teacher education should be conceived of an organized as a seamless continuum; it is often divided into three stages, namely:

- Initial teacher training (for student – teachers)
- Induction (introducing new teachers into teaching job by away of training or providing support).
- Teacher development or continuing professional development and intensive in-service training for practicing teachers.

Teacher education is an aspect of education that determines the success or failure of other aspects of education. The role of teachers in the provision of quality education at all levels cannot be over emphasized. The teacher and the kind of education and training he receives are important for the quality of the overall education system as “no education system may rise above the quality of its teacher” (FRN, 2004). The teacher is seen as a key person in the nation’s education enterprise whose quality of training could mar or improve educational results. Udofot (2005) observed that without good teachers there cannot be good engineers, good medical doctors, good lawyers etc. Without good teachers, there would be school leavers from trade schools with undeveloped occupational skills, hence, without good teachers there would be national retrogression than progression. To assess the quality of the Nigerian teachers is an approach to critically examine how far the Nigerian teachers education ensures quality in the teachers produced and the priorities set in teacher education programmes to address important issues such as balance, relevance, teaching methods and teaching practice experience.

### **Teacher Education Curricula and Training**

Curriculum is all the contents and learning experience, a learner is exposed to under the auspices of the school. Okoro and Nosdika (2014) defined curriculum as a vehicle through which the schools thrive towards achievement of their educational goals/ ends, be they those of the nation, state, local government or even the community. Ivowi (2009) viewed curriculum as a tool designed for educating a person in order to change the orientation, behaviour, action and values to that of a good person whose concern is not only to develop self but also the world around. Eyisi (2014) defined curriculum is the organized knowledge presented to learners in a school which covers every element in the learning environment such as the subject matter to be learned, the students, the teachers and the physical environment.

Teacher education curricula therefore, are the programmes of study geared towards the preparation of teachers, for the various levels of educational ladder (Mbakwem, 2014). That is to say that the documents which guide the achievement of qualitative teacher education are curricula implemented in teacher training institutions. The quality of teachers produced is a product of the quality of training given; this makes it difficult to separate teacher training from teacher education curricula because the former is guided by later. Through professional training (both pre and in-service) teachers are equipped with the needed competencies, skills, knowledge and values, attitudinal dispositions and insights for efficient and effective output. Teacher education is the training given to intending and practicing teachers in order to develop their content knowledge and their pedagogical skills. Ololube (2007) explained that teacher education and training, provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and aptitude to be familiar with the art and science of teaching which in turn gives them confidence to carryout their task. Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin (2015) explained that the realization of the educational goals and objectives depends on the quality and the quantity of available teaching manpower. This can be influenced by the availability of adequate training and retaining programmes for those about to teach and those already teaching respectively. The training is the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Teacher education and training are an embodiment of professional development for teachers. Through teacher training, pre-service teachers learn professional courses in education, concepts in their subject areas and strategies for teaching those subjects. Thus, the issues of teacher preparation, training and retraining are at the centre of education reform at all levels. Teacher education and training are usually directed towards the achievement of the goals of teacher education in Nigeria, which are to:

- a. produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system;
- b. further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers,

- c. help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
- d. provided teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adoptable to changing situations; and
- e. enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2013).

National goals for teacher education as stated above are meant to act as the focus not only for government activities on the various teacher education programmes of the nation but also for activities of other participants in the various programmes. The goals are expected to be used as the means for monitoring and for impact assessments of the respective teacher education programmes in the nation. To a large extent, the above stated goals for teacher education have not been realized due to issues teacher education in curricula.

### **Issues in Nigerian Teacher Education Curricula:**

1. **Balance:** One major cause of lack of balance in the Nigeria schools curricula is curriculum overload. Generally, Nigerian schools curricula have been criticized for being monstrously overloaded (Offorma, 2006; Afangideh, 2009). Balance in the content of teacher education curricula could also be measured in terms of the time allocated to the development of academic the professional competences of the students during their training. It could be measured in terms of the differences in the number of respective courses offered in the programme. More professional courses with few academic courses should be included in teacher education curricula. The Nigerian teacher education curriculum has come under severe criticisms in term of balance. This is because much time is spent on teaching them general academic causes rather than professional courses in order to redress their deficiencies. For instance, teacher education colleges in Nigeria tend to cram of academic courses and fewer professional courses into the initial training programmes as though the initial training is the only opportunity for their training. Thus, they cram too many courses into the initial training programmes, making the curricula overloaded.

Udofot (2005) observed that the practice of overloading the student-teachers with academic courses with the view to developing their academic competences is said to be so because most students in Nigeria often arrive teacher's institutions with inadequate standards of general education.

2. **Relevance:** One of the responsibilities of teacher training institutions is to ensure that the curricula contents they provide the student teacher are relevant to the needs of the schools and the communities the student teachers are to serve. According to Udofot (2005) teachers training institutions generally seem to see academic contents in the main teaching subjects as being relevant to the needs of the schools when the



teaching of those subjects meet the Examination bodies requirements. Teacher education curricula do not prepare the student-teachers to relate their subjects to the problems of the communities they serve. Also, there is no sufficient link between teacher education curricula and the schools curriculum. There is a gap between the curricula thought to teachers in training and the reality that exists in schools they are going to teach after graduation. Teacher education curricula and programmes are deemed excessively academic and remote from the real challenges confronting classrooms.

3. **Teaching Methods:** Selection of teaching methods for teacher training programmes in Nigeria is a more complex issue than it is with choosing teaching methods for any other educational programme. Teaching methods chosen for other educational programme are used as means of transmitting knowledge, but methods employed while training teachers are meant to serve as examples of methods they should use to teach. The personal experience of the author having gone through teacher education programmes in Nigeria is that teacher education institutions mostly use lecture and notes dictation methods.

Teacher educators advocate the use of innovative methods in theory but in practice, what is used is the traditional expository (lecture) method. The implication is that these methods do not assist student-teachers to develop innovative and effective teaching techniques. Thus, they graduate and become teachers who teach using the traditional method of teaching because according to Udofot (2005) 'teachers teach as they were taught'.

4. **Teaching Practice Experience:** Teaching practice is an important component of teacher education programme. It is compulsorily undertaken by every student-teacher in any teacher education programme. As a matter of fact, teaching practice experience is what differentiates student-teachers from other students in other faculties. Izuagba and Obiefuna (2008) described teaching practice as a close monitoring training given to an intern teacher for a period of time so as to apply the theoretical knowledge gained in a typical classroom situation. It enables students' teachers to develop the initial professional confidence and enables wrong teaching habits to be corrected in would be teachers. Critics of teacher education in general and teaching practice in particular contend that a good teacher is born, not made. They argue that teaching practice is unnecessary as part of teacher education programme and that an intelligent; liberally educated individual, well grounded in the subject field can teach without a period of practice under any guidance.

In reality, teachers training institutions in Nigeria practice a variety of teaching practice models. While some send their students out once for a block of one

semester, others send their students out twice (each session lasting a period of six weeks) in the programme. Udofot (2005) observed that the practice in which some teachers institutions send out their student- teachers only in the last year for teaching practice has some limitations. One of such is that the student-teachers would lose the advantage of having the experience twice or more. Also, the last year is usually a busy period that should be spent not only in preparing for the final examination but also on their seminars and projects. Mkpa (2008) lamented that the pedagogic orientation given to student-teachers in colleges and faculties of education is too scanty to properly equip them for the expertise required in the field after graduation.

### **Conclusions**

Nigerians are yearning for quality in the products of the Nigeria education system. Parents, employers of labour and indeed the general public now tend to wonder whether the school system has lost its focus. It is expected that the quality of education our children receive in schools should equip them to be useful not to themselves but also to their families and their communities. These are dependent on the quality of teacher education given and the teachers produced in Nigeria.

Teacher Education curricula is the bedrock on which lies the production of well equipped, well trained, competent and informed teachers. This paper examined and criticized the Nigeria teacher education curricula in terms of balance, relevance, teaching methods and teaching practice experience.

### **Recommendations**

The following points are suggestions for the transformation of teacher education programme:

1. Teacher education should be seen as a continuum of teacher learning which spans all through life; it should be a life-long experience that goes from their initial education to the retirement. Continuous training should be perceived as an integral element of teaching profession. When this is done, there will not be need to overload the curricula for initial teacher training. The curricula contents will spread across the entire teachers teaching job and not restricted to only the initial training programme.
2. Teacher training institutions should plan and develop curricula for initial teacher education programmes to reflect a few of relevant academic courses and more of professional courses which they really need for indepth exploration and use when they leave the teachers' institutions. To reduce the time and effort spent on academic content at the expense of professional content in teacher education institutions, some theory courses in Education which might not be of immediate

need to the student-teachers could be kept for their future training periods like during seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences.

3. Possible innovative methods which teacher training institutions should employ while training the teachers include the use of participatory, discovery, simulation, role playing, case study, discussion, problem solving and micro teaching methods. Teacher educators should use these methods to sensitize their student-teachers while they are in training. Student- teachers' who are trained using these innovative teaching methods and approaches, would tend to use such when they leave their institutions.
4. The role of teaching practice in teacher education has to be reevaluated. The exposition of student- teachers to a full one year professional and industrial experience at the end of their course work in order to reduce the level of low quality pedagogical practices that beset schools is highly recommended. It is believed that the duration of practical field experience will enable them to link pedagogical theory with its practice.

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