

# Rethinking Teacher Education in Nigeria and Good Governance for the Enhancement of Sustainable Educational Development: The Challenges and Prospects

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## Abstract

As a result of the persistent falling standard of education in Nigeria which is also continuously leading to the occurrence of many nagging and gloomy challenges in the country, the need for the re-intensification and revitalization of teacher education cannot be over emphasized or underestimated. This article, therefore underscores Rethinking Teacher Education in Nigeria and Good Governance for the Enhancement of Sustainable Educational Development: The Challenges and Prospects. The fundamental issues contained in the article are the conceptual discourses of teacher education, good governance, and sustainable educational development, the brief historical sketch of teacher education in Nigeria as well as the issues and challenges of teacher education in Nigeria. However, the challenges comprised among others, the inadequate funding, poor leadership, gender imbalance, the marginalization of teaching profession, the low number of graduates as well as the oversupply of NCE and university graduates in some disciplines and sub combinations. A part from that, there are also the conclusion and recommendations. It was recommended that, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the State and the Local Government Areas are anticipated to substantially redouble efforts in ensuring that education at, all levels is sufficiently funded in the country; the need for dynamic and transparent leadership characterized by honesty, proven integrity and progress is also of paramount importance in the educational development of Nigeria. Furthermore, it was also recommended that, the government should place greater priority on gender balance in education so that the sustainable development could be tremendously achieved; the marginalization of the teaching profession should be completely discarded and the number of the graduate teachers in the country should be made to be sufficiently alright. Lastly, the government should scrupulously realign and readjust the national curriculum in order to mitigate the challenges of oversupply of NCE and the university graduates in some disciplines and combinations which may not be necessary.

**Keywords:** *Teacher Education, Governance, Sustainable Development, Challenges, Prospects.*

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## **Background to the Study**

As a developing country of the world, Nigeria is in dire need of quality education of her citizenry. This is in view of the fact that, it is an indispensable vehicle that could be effectively utilized for the enhancement of a sustainable national development in the country. Education is a weapon of liberation from ignorance, poverty and diseases. It is also a core that substantially supports the other critical sectors of the society viz economy, health, agriculture, polity, law, industry etc. and it should also be noted that, in the absence of quality and consistently functional education, all the sectors of the society mentioned are likely to easily crumble. The focal point of this article, therefore, is on teacher education in Nigeria. Teacher education is monumentally significant in the sense that, it is capable of enabling the Nigerian teachers to courageously play vital roles towards the progress and development of their country. Nigeria is today facing innumerable challenges hindering the attainment of a sustainable development. Some of the major challenges consist of inadequate funding, poor leadership, the gender imbalance, the marginalization of the teaching profession, the low number of graduates and also, the oversupply of NCE and university graduates in some disciplines and sub-combinations (Boyi, et. al., 2009) (Asagha et. al., 2013).

Furthermore, it should be noted that, all the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria are very serious and for that reason, they need holistic interventions. The interventions are for sustainable development of the country. These therefore, include the roles of the stakeholders in the development of the teacher education in Nigeria which include for example, the National Teachers Institute (N.T.I), All Nigeria Conference of Principals of Secondary Schools (ANCOPSS), the Colleges of Education (COE), etc. The fundamental contributions of the stakeholders cannot be over emphasized.

## **Conceptual Discourse**

To have a better understanding of the article, there are some key concepts that need to be clearly explained. However, the concepts are as follows:

### **Teacher Education**

The concept of teacher education refers to the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in schools and classrooms. However, it can also be perceived as a form of education which is properly planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach particularly but not exclusively, in primary and post primary levels of schooling in its extended dimension, it encompasses the preparation (Adedeji, et. al., 2008). Other scholars such as Sylvester (2009) also attempted to define the concept of teacher education. For Sylvester, the teacher education is an educational programme specifically designed for individuals who are willing to become teachers to acquire skills, disposition, knowledge, habits, attitudes, values, norms, ethics and professional competencies that compare them to effectively influence learning situation.

Furthermore, the teacher education comes in different forms. It can also be classified into for example three. There is first of all, the initial teacher education which is simply a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher; there is the inductive

process of providing training and support during the first few years of teaching or the first year in particular school, and lastly, there is the teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD) which is an in-service process of practicing teachers. However, the teacher education has also some fundamental objectives. These include the production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system; the encouragement of the spirit of equity and creativity, nationalism and sense of belonging and there is also the issue of helping the prospective teachers to fit into the social life of the community, the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objective. Apart from that, there are also the other objectives. There is the production of teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for the assignment and also, the production of knowledgeable, progressive and effective teachers who can inspire the children to learn (National Policy on Education, 2004).

From the foregoing analysis, therefore, it can be vividly understood that, the issue of teacher education in Nigeria is greatly fundamental. This is because of the fact that, the system is capable of providing the socio-economic and political opportunities for the numerous Nigerians to struggle in the attainment of sustainable national development in the country. However, prospects of Nigeria in the international scene can also be massively uplifted.

### **Good Governance**

This is also one of the key concepts that help in providing a clearer understanding of the article. The word governance has to do with an activity of governing a country by its leaders. Within the context of the article, good governance entails a good leadership or an exemplary leadership characterized by the principles of justice, equity and good conscience and also a leadership that is capable of contributing in the promotion of progress and development. The major problem of Nigeria today is bad governance. This means that our leaders failed to impact positively on the development of the country. As a result of that, the country is now hugely affected by some social problems which comprised the Boko Haram insurgency, religious fanaticism, ethnic cleansing, armed banditry, cattle rustling, etc. leading to the greater loss of lives and highly precious properties. All the challenge mentioned are gravely serious. This is due to the fact that, they do not pave the way in the promotion of quality teacher education that can enhance the attainment of an indispensable sustainable development in Nigeria. Therefore, there is an intricate relationship between good governance and teacher education in the country. Their roles are of paramount importance for development.

### **Sustainable Educational Development**

The Bruntland Commission (1987) defined Sustainable development as “the development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”. On the other hand, there is also the concept of sustainable educational development. Within the context of this article, the sustainable educational development can be seen as a system that is capable of continuously and consistently providing better opportunities for the socio-economic and political development of a country. Nigeria can be considered as a striking illustration. When there is a sustainable teacher educational development in the country, many positive changes can be attained. The other sectors of the

economy such as for example, the agriculture, health, industry, security and others would be greatly improved in such a manner that standard of living of the masses can rise so that they can live happier and comfortable life. Therefore, the best thing that can be done is to always accord greater priority for development by the government.

### **Teacher Education in Nigeria: A Brief Historical Sketch**

The brief history of teacher education in Nigeria is greatly significant. Historically, the teacher education came into existence in Nigeria around the 18<sup>th</sup> century during the colonial time and it was also through the influence of the Christian Missionary. The incident actually happened at the church. It was revealed that the teacher was considered as the church catechist who was chosen and trained by the priest. Therefore, the fundamental role he played was that of a teacher and pastor who assisted some groups of people such as the aged, the youth and the children who were new converts of the religion of Christianity. As a formal system of education, the teacher education came into being around the year 1896. It was with the establishment of St. Andrew's College in Oyo state – Nigeria and it was purposely designed to train the teachers for the service of the Church Missionary Society. Later on, when the colonial government really understood the importance of literacy in the communication and commercial activities, something was done. This means that the colonial government in Nigeria intervened in the teacher education by regulating the conditions of services and organizing evening classes and the vacation for teachers.

Furthermore, it was realized that the early form of teacher education concentrated attention mainly on the production of teachers who taught at the primary level of education. Before the political independence of Nigeria, the secondary schools were very few. It was also observed that the bulk of the secondary teachers included the expatriates and missionaries whereby the majority of them had no teacher education (Yaro, 2011). With the attainment of political independence in Nigeria, there was an increase in the enrolment because of the competition in the schools established among the missionaries. However, as a result of that, there was an increase in the demand of teachers both at the primary and the secondary levels in the country.

### **The Issues and Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher Education in Nigeria today is characterized by numerous challenges which are seriously halting the attainment of a sustainable development. These comprise inter alia the inadequate funding, poor leadership, the marginalization of the teaching profession, the low number of graduates, gender imbalance as well as the oversupply of N.C.E and the university graduates in some disciplines and sub combinations. However, the explanations for the challenges mentioned could be critically analyzed as follows:

I. **Inadequate Funding:** the funding of education has been a perennial challenge in Nigeria. This is epitomized by the fact that, the managers of primary and secondary institutions in Nigeria are in consensus that their institutions are grossly underfunded. This is evidenced by the degree of dilapidation that characterizes the primary and secondary school buildings in some parts of the country (Boyi, 2013, Boyi, 2015, Boyi, 2019). There used to be the cases of non-payment of teachers' salaries and allowances and there are also lack of necessary teaching and learning materials in our Nigerian schools. The situation really needs

to be addressed by the government. However, there is also the issue of mismanagement and diversion of substantial resources from the educational system to private usage which subsequently leads to a situation whereby the understanding has been criticized and attributed to several factors ranging from diversion, management of fund and lack of focus (Bolag 2002, Victor 2002).

ii. **Poor Leadership:** Leadership has been defined as the act of influencing a group of people in a particular situation towards the attainment of a goal or a set of goals. In other words, it is the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group towards goal achieving in a given situation (Christopher and Larry, 1987). It should be noted that the problems of education is the sequence of failure of leadership in Nigeria and its failure can be found in the lack of basic educational equipment which adversely affects effective teaching and learning in schools. However, the school laboratories lack the basic facilities that will make them function in relation to instructional materials and this can be a situation that is experienced throughout the country. About 40% of students in schools do not have textbooks and writing materials (NPEC, 1999). Majority of schools have inadequate classrooms which are most of the times overcrowded.

iii. **Gender Imbalance:** This is one of the issues and challenges of teacher education in Nigeria. The term gender has to do with the socially constructed aspects of differences between men and women (Scott and Marshal, 2005). The term gender can also be perceived as the distinction created by the societies between human beings on the basis of masculinity-femininity relation to their expected roles in the society (Akinmade, 2010). Therefore, with regard to the issue of teacher education in Nigeria, it can be clearly understood that the gender imbalance is a well-known feature of Nigerian educational landscape. However, the fact is that, the educational policies and practices in Nigeria are to say the least gender insensitive and this is not fashioned to achieve gender balance in school (Boyi, 2017, Boyi, 2019). Since the challenge of gender imbalance has not been adequately addressed by the government in Nigeria, the development of teacher education is not likely to be achieved in the country.

iv. **Marginalization of Teaching Profession:** This is one of the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria. The education sector in general is highly neglected in Nigeria because it is not adequately funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria. It should be noted that there is no political will on the part of the government and corruption which now has become part of our culture is making a mess of the entire National Policy on Education. However, in addition to this, the teachers are also marginalized and the profession is the most impoverished of all sectors of the labour in Nigeria (Yaro, 2011). It is because of the facts highlighted that, many Nigerians are no longer interested in the teaching profession and they accept it because there are no alternatives. Whenever the opportunities come, they can easily quit the teaching profession and search for more greener pastures for sustainable development.

v. **Low Number of Graduates:** The number of graduates that are anticipated to teach in the Nigerian Primary and Secondary Schools is low in the country. Therefore, this becomes a serious issue and the challenge of teacher education in Nigeria. Teacher quality throughout the country is unequal because there are also inequalities in the availability of qualified teachers in

different states of the federation. Coupled with that, most of the primary school teachers are yet to attain the minimum qualification which is the Nigerian Certification in Education (NCE) as required by the National Policy of Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009).

vi. **Oversupply of NCE and University Graduates in some Disciplines and Subject Combinations:** This is also another factor that deters the smooth progress of teacher education for sustainable development in Nigeria. Some researches indicated that there is an oversupply of NCE and graduate teachers in some disciplines and subject combinations while there is a general shortage of teachers in English, Mathematics, Physics, Home Economics, Technical Education, Primary Education Studies, Nursery Education and Computer Science (Yaro, 2011). The only way out here is that, the Federal Government of Nigeria needs to do something about the situation. This means that more and more teachers should be employed to work adequately based on their areas of specialization so that they could contribute significantly in the attainment of teacher education for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

As it has been extensively discussed in this article, the teacher education is something that is extremely important in our country, Nigeria. This is because of the gigantic contributions it offers in the attainment of an indispensable and sustainable national development in the country. Despite the huge significance of the teacher education in Nigeria, it is very disheartening to note that the Federal Government of Nigeria does not accord it the right priority. This created a situation whereby the teacher education is now besieged by numerous challenges of development. The major challenges discussed in the article comprised inadequate funding, poor leadership, gender imbalance and the marginalization of the teaching profession. However, the other challenges are the low number of graduates and the oversupply of NCE and University graduates in some disciplines and subject combinations. It should be noted that providing solutions to the challenges identified is the only way forward. Nigeria can develop better.

### **Teacher Education in Nigeria: Prospects and Recommendations for Good Governance and Sustainable Educational Development.**

It is crystal clear that based on the critical issues and the challenges of teacher education discussed in Nigeria, some recommendations need to be offered. These are as follows:

- a. There is the need for the Federal Government of Nigeria, the State and the Local Government Areas to substantially redouble their efforts in collectively ensuring that education at all levels is sufficiently funded in the country. This is because the education for all is the responsibility for all. By so doing, a huge sustainable teacher educational development could be successfully attained.
- b. There is also the need for dynamic and transparent leadership characterized by proven integrity, honesty and progress. This entails that the teacher educators in Nigeria should be leaders with the organizing ability. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that they have the zeal and enthusiasm for teaching and they should be capable of discharging their responsibilities with the utmost sincerity for sustainable development.

- c. The issue of Gender Education in Nigeria is greatly phenomenal. It should be worthy of note that the sustainable teacher educational development could only be successfully and tremendously achieved in Nigeria when the government places greater priority on gender balance in education. Both the male and female teachers should be adequately supported. With that, the government could boost a prosperous development on teacher education.
- d. Teaching is one of the best professions in the world that deserve huge respects. The marginalization of the teaching profession should therefore be completely discarded by the government. It should however be understood that, the teaching profession should be highly upgraded in such a way that both the veteran and prospective teachers should be strongly encouraged to feel that they are happily part of the mainstream society.
- e. It is strongly recommended that the number of the graduate teachers in the country should be made to be sufficiently available and they should be capable of rendering quality teaching services with the transparent humility in the country. That is just the responsibility of the government.
- f. Lastly, there is need for the government to scrupulously realign and readjust the national curriculum so as to mitigate the challenges of oversupply of NCE and the university graduates in some disciplines and subject combinations which may not be necessary. If the government can do that, the academic activities could be normal and be smoothly conducted in our institutions of learning. Development could also be attained.

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