

## Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria Act 2004 and the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Schools

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Nigeria is a diverse nation with an estimated ethnic group exceeding 250. This has posed a serious challenge to teachers who are daily confronted with socio-cultural, religious and attitudinal differences which school as socializing agents must address. Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria Act 2004 (TRCNA) promised professionalism of teaching, registration and quality assurance. This study adopted a doctrinal approach to appraise the impact of the Act in ensuring inclusive education in Nigerian schools. Findings of the study indicated that despite the Act, more than 50% of teachers in Nigerian schools were not registered as professional teachers, while for those registered, the TRCN had not been able to justify its existence in the improvement of teachers' quality delivery. Hence, the Act required repositioning in order to achieve its lofty aims. Suggestions were made for the review of some of its provisions for effective service delivery.

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## **Background to the Study**

Teachers' roles in the education of the youths could not be quantified. The efficiency and effectiveness of teachers determine the learning outcome. The ethno-religious plurality of Nigeria requires that teachers who will impart national values must be professionals. This has implications for its curriculum planning, developmental and implementation. Teachers as catalyst of knowledge are at the centre of all these. The National Policy on Education (NPE) (FRN 2013) provided yardsticks for quality education in Nigeria. The quality of instruction at all levels of education must reflect the Nigeria's national objectives of 'a free and democratic society, 'a just and egalitarian society; a united, strong and self-reliant nation; a great and dynamic economy and a land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens (FRN, 2004)

Based on the national objectives, the Nigeria's philosophy of education is hinged on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system. Inclusive education is a form of education that gives opportunities to all citizens to have access to education and training necessary to enable them to contribute to the sustainable development of the nation. Specifically, the philosophy of Nigeria's education is geared towards the development of national consciousness and national unity, development of right types of values and attitudes and the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies for individual to contribute to the sustainable societal development (FRN 2013).

In all the above, the position of the teacher is critical. No objective of education could be attained when teachers are not adequately skilled to drive the curriculum. In order to provide education that would be inclusive, given the plurality of the Nigerian nation, educational policies and practices must be dynamic, while teachers' professional training and development become central. The enactment of the TRCNA 2004 appears to be the right step in achieving these. This study examined the TRCNA 2004 and challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria. The objectives are to:

1. Undertake an overview of teacher education in Nigeria.
2. Examine the provisions of TRCNA
3. Discuss challenges of inclusive education and the role of TRCNA

## **Overview of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Teacher education in Nigeria started as a result of the introduction of western education following the British occupation of its territories and the 1914 Amalgamation by Lord Lugard. Upon the annexation of the territories, British instituted policies to subdue any resistance to its imperial overlord. (Omotoso, 1988). The country which emerged as a result of the amalgamation of the incongruous ethnic groups were multi-cultural and multi-religious with ethnic groups in excess of 250 and diverse ethnic nationalities. The British had no alternative than to proceed on the promotion of western education which had been earlier introduced for the purpose of evangelism by the European Christian missionaries (Osokoya, 2008).

The western education was used as a stabilizing force for the British and it became an agent of socialization and status symbols for the colonialists. This trend continues up till now with education being generally accepted as agent of socialization (Chukwu, 2015). The teacher training becomes crucial in this process. There are two historical accounts of the introduction of western education to Nigeria. (Osokoya, 2010 and Fafunwa, 2004). It was first introduced by the Portuguese merchants when they landed in Benin City, present southern Nigeria town in 1472. In their trading activities, the trades realised the need to communicate with the local people. They therefore, invited Roman Catholic Mission from Portugal to man the newly established institutions of training and worship (Fafunwa, 2004). The author noted that the encounter was short-lived due to internecine wars and slave trade.

The second attempt was successful. Various missionary groups operated in southern Nigeria, while efforts were to set up missions in the Muslim north between 1842 and 1892 (Osokoya, 2010). These schools had limited funds from the subscription of local congregation. The curriculum of the schools was basically on 3RS-Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. The teachers appointed were not professionally trained because teacher training colleges were not in existence in Nigeria that time.

Missionaries, therefore, improved on their educational offerings by developing manpower for teaching. The first of such institutions was founded in Abeokuta by Church Missionary Society in 1859. The Baptist Mission later built a teacher training college at Ogbomoso in 1897. The Wesley Methodist Mission also established Wesley College, Ibadan in 1905. Teacher education started in northern Nigeria in 1909 (Osokoya, 2010).

The central objective of the missions' teacher training colleges was to produce school masters who would become teachers, Christian religious officials and leaders (Osoba and Fajana 1980 cited in Osokoya, 2010). Hence, subjects taught were limited to the 3Rs (ecclesiastic purpose and bookkeeping) (Fafunwa, 2004). Phelps Stokes Commission Report 1922 was critical of these teacher training institutions for their poor and irrelevant curriculum and supervision (Osokoya, 2010). This report led to the division of teacher training institutions into Elementary Training Center (ETC) and Higher Elementary Training College (HETC). The teacher education in Nigeria recorded a remarkable development when Yaba Higher College was established to mount teacher education in 1932.

Policy of regionalism introduced by 1946 Richards Constitution developed teacher education substantially. Regional political parties sprang up with manifestoes on methods to improve educational offerings (Omotoso, 1988). This was followed by Macpherson Constitution of 1956 which consolidated on regional structure and allowed each zone to enact educational laws. This led to accelerated infrastructural development in education and social services, which set apart the western and esteem region which made education a priority (Osokoya, 2010). After independence in 1960, there was a civil

war (1967-1970) which showed down education and socio-economic development. However, the civil war experience led to the First National Development Plan (1970-74) which prioritized education towards national rehabilitation. A critical policy of this era was Universal Primary education (UPE) which revolutionised primary, secondary and tertiary institutions (Fafunwa, 2004). The improvement in teacher education programme is tremendous in the last four decades. The NPE published in 1977 has been revised many times (1981, 1988, 2004 and 2013) to harness the dynamics in education as a global tool for sustainability.

### **Goals of Teacher Education in Nigeria's Policy in Education**

The goals of teacher education in Nigeria are as stated by the National Policy on education (FRN, 2004). These are:

1. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
2. Further encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
3. Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
4. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.
5. Enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN 2013; Article 93)

The policy provides further that all teachers shall be professional trained, while teacher education shall be tailored towards quality (Article 94). Based on these, teachers are to access regular training in best pedagogical practices. (Article 96). Opportunities for promotion, in-service training and transfer without loss of status were part of the policy's provision for teachers. Of particular importance is Article 100 of the policy which recognizes teaching as a profession and highlights the setting up the TRCN for professionalism of teachers. TRCN is backed up with an Act of Parliament (TRCNA).

Teachers in Nigeria face a number of challenges, ranging from poor remuneration; poor societal recognition, lack of motivation, inadequate training and certification, unqualified personnel among others (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012). The passage of the Act is expected to ameliorate these challenges and reposition teaching. The provisions of the policy are quite comprehensive. It recognizes teaching as a dynamic and social-oriented exercise.

### **Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria Act 2004**

Prior to the passage of the TRCNA, teaching was not regarded as a profession. This was because all those who had some forms of formal education but had not secured jobs in other sectors of the economy could come into it and use it as a stepping stone to greener jobs. According to Ozano (2013), teachers faced a number of challenges in developing countries, which included meagre salaries, unwholesome conditions of work and lack of social prestige. Due to poor remuneration, many developing countries are losing these critical personnel to other sectors.

The Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) contributed greatly to the formation of the TRCN and subsequent efforts to change the social perception of the people to teachers. Ozano (2013) argued that NUT had engaged the governments at all levels on the rights of teachers and this had led to the TRCN Act. Since its coming into existence TRCN had opened a register through which teachers were being registered nationwide. It also set standards for registration to, and regulation of the teaching profession.

In order to stem the trend of brain drain, poor quality of teaching and use of inadequate qualifications, TRCN Act was passed on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1993 as Decree 31 with the aim of “determining the standards of knowledge and skill to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as teachers and for matters connected therewith.” The Act stipulates conditions for registration, requirement of mandatory training, control and discipline of teachers, among others.

### **Establishment of TRCN**

The TRCN as a body corporate is to determine who a teacher is; the quantum of knowledge, and skills required to teach; maintain teachers' register and their classification to levels. In addition, section 1, subsections 2 and 3 TRCN Act 2004 confer corporate powers and perpetual succession on this body.

A comparative analysis of the establishment clause of the TRCN 2004 to other professional bodies in Nigeria show that the TRCN Act is either a product of inelegant drafting or is made to merely satisfy the agitations of teachers for an Act to regulate their work. Section 1(2) of the Medical and Dental Practitioners Act, (MDCN) 2004 appears to assume that the Council already has the idea of who a medica/ dental practitioner is. The Legal Practitioners Act 2004 equally provides for the General Bar Council (section 1), Body of Benchers (section 3), Legal Practitioner Privileges Committee (section 5). The Council of Legal Education Act 2004 regulates the training, practice, conduct and eligibility of persons recognized to practice law in Nigeria.

The TRCN Act appears indecisive on the professional status of the teacher. Section 1(1)(a) directs Council to determine a teacher. This appears absurd in that teacher education had commenced in Nigeria since 19<sup>th</sup> Century (Oskoya, 2010). The NPE (FRN 2013), Article 100 lucidly provides that all teachers in educational institutions should be professionally qualified. Seven institutions that provide teacher education. Teacher education is offered at various level in Nigeria. These are: Colleges of Education, Universities, National Teachers' Institutes, School of Education in the Polytechnics, National Institute of Nigerian Languages (NINLAN and National Mathematics Centre.

With the robust teacher institutions which are listed and given that education is on Concurrent Legislature List of the Constitution (Schedule II, 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, one wonders why the legislature does not know who teachers are but request the Council it created in the Act to determine it. This is a serious omission. It does not also define a teacher. Doing that would have assisted the Council in its duty of determining who a teacher is.

Furthermore, it could be contended that a comparison of the establishment clause of TRCN Act and MDCN Act shows that by the language and tenor of the TRCN Act, it is not intended to be an Act to regulate what the legislature is convinced to be a professional body. This appears to be an extension of the social perception of teachers compared to medical practitioners in Nigeria.

### **Registration of Teachers**

A person may be registered as a teacher subject to section 4(6) of the Act. Section 4(6) mandates the Council to come up with guidelines for keeping the register, the mode of application, determination of qualifications for registrations, specification of fees for application and the subsequent annual subscription payment. The implication of these rules is that the Council has a duty to determine the mode of application, eligibility of the persons to be registered and the fees/subscription payable for the maintenance of the professional body. Section 6(1) gives two paths to register as a teacher in Nigeria. The first, is for the person to be a Nigerian, who must have passed a qualifying examination accepted by the Council and also completed a practical training. This path insists on passing the examination and a period of teaching practicum to imbibe the knowledge, skills and abilities of teachers.

The second path is for a non-Nigerian who holds a foreign teaching qualification. The qualification must be recognized by the Council. The qualification must be such that entitles the person to practice teaching in the country where it was issued. The other country (where the qualification originated) must be a friendly nation that accords Nigerian professional teachers the same privilege. Finally, the applicant must have sufficient practical experience. It appears that this Act is silent on the registration of a Nigerian trained in a discipline which entitles the person to practice teaching in the country of training.

Apart from these two paths, other requirements for registration are as contained in section 6(2) (TRCN 2004). The applicant must satisfy the Council of his good character, attainment of 21 years of age and no previous conviction for an offence of fraud or dishonesty. These requirements, if implemented strictly will prevent persons of doubtful characters to enter teaching profession. This only prevent the spread of wrong socializing values. It may be argued that by these provisions, the Council takes into consideration the teacher competences required for effective classroom inclusive schools in Nigeria (Chukwu, 2015). The Legal Practitioner Act (LPA), 2004 has similar provisions for those who may practice as legal practitioners in Nigeria. Section 2(1) LPA provides that a person to be registered/enrolled as a legal practitioner must have the qualification to practice law in a country where the legal system is similar to that of Nigeria. Another qualification under LPA is that the person must be a Nigerian and must satisfy the benchers of his good character. In both professions, adequate qualification and good character are critical, while only a citizen may be called to the Nigerian Bar, a foreigner may register and practice teaching profession (Section 6(1) TRCN, 2004). However, for special purposes, the CJN may permit a foreigner to practice law for the purpose of particular proceedings and no more (Section 2(1)(b), LPA 2004).

### **Teachers' Professionalism and Inclusive Education in Schools.**

The TRCN Act 2004, despite its drafting inadequacies provides for the professionalization of teachers to ensure inclusive education.

An inclusive education is the type which eliminates gender inequalities and promotes equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable including persons with disabilities (SDG Goals4), Kusimo and Felix (2019) highlighted the benefits of inclusive education is to integrate all pupils with disabilities it challenges to access educational opportunities. An inclusive school, therefore, is the one which successfully gives unconditional acceptance, understanding and attention to student differences and diversities which could be as a result of physical, gender, socio-economic status, religion or place of birth in classroom teaching (Kusmo and Chidozie, 2019). This task requires the attention of a professional teacher who has a full understanding of the dynamism of the curriculum, adequate academic qualifications, requisite experience and access to formal and on the job education (Imam Tanimi, Fasasi and Ottan, 2021). This is possible with the full implementation of the screening and registration proceeding of TRCN which ensures that only those who are qualified should have access to the classroom.

Alaba (2018) conducted a study on teaching aids for inclusive education. A descriptive survey method was adopted to collect the data. Results indicated a significant difference on the students' performance. This study is relevant to this study because of the teachers' role in the use of teaching aids. A TRCN registered teacher has capacity to implement inclusive education sustainably. The implementation of the TRCN Act is confronted with many challenges. First, majority of teachers in private schools in Nigeria are not registered as teachers. The implication of this is that they do not meet the standards for registration. The TRCN reported that in southwest. Nigeria, 70% of teachers in private school were unqualified and lacked requirements for registration (Kenechi, 2023).

Tanimi-Imam, Fasasi and Ottan (2021), also conducted a study to investigate implementation of TRCN guidelines in secondary schools in Kwara State, Nigeria. 320 teachers and 66 TRCN staff were selected as participants in the study. The study's outcome indicated that teachers' awareness level of TRCN was not satisfactory because majority of the respondents only had good level of awareness about monitoring, internship, and Annual examination. The study rated the level of implementation of TRCN guidelines was fair but concluded that additional efforts were needed for improvement. The study recommended that Federal Government should improve upon the resources and facilities available to TRCN in order to increase the scope of its monitoring. The study identified the need to improve on the TRCN services in order to improve teachers' service delivery.

Teachers' quality is a critical factor in teachers' performance. This perhaps, informed the assertion of Wokocha (2013) that teacher's quality could be determined through intellectual competence, mastery of content, teaching experience, skills and dissemination of knowledge. Hence, an important method of improving teacher's performance is the capacity building through Mandatory Continuous Professional

Development Programmes (MCPD) of TRCN. This would improve teachers' social skills, classroom management and pedagogy. The TRCN (the Council), according to its Act, is saddled with the responsibilities of professionalisation of teaching profession. It is established as a regulatory body to control and regulate the affairs of teachers in Nigeria. There was a delay in the commencement of the Act. While the Registrar was appointed in April 1999, six years after its passage, the Council waited for another year to commence operation in 2000. The delay in commencing operation was a serious setback for the achievement of the Act's laudable objectives.

The Council has a duty in the professional development of teachers in Nigeria. First, it publishes register and list of corrections. Section 5, (TRCN Act, 2004) provides that the Registrar shall publish the register annually. Other activities of the TRCN include conduct of professional examinations for teachers. These enhance teachers' skills, academic qualifications, knowledge, skills and abilities before and after registration and licensing (Alimigbi and Aroseh, 2020). The Council also inducts of students on graduation (Alimigbi and Aroseh, 2020). In the performance of these tasks, TRCN is confronted with a number of challenges. The first one is the teachers' abilities to access professional development. Tolu-Kolawole (2023) reported that teachers have not been able to get sponsors for professional development training. The general lack of subscription of teachers to TRCN and MCPD is a seen.

Oke, Ogundele and Mainomo (2017), looked at emerging challenges confronting Nigerian teachers. They identified concepts and characteristics of a profession. The challenges identified were poor remuneration, determining facilities for teaching in schools, differences in categorising teachers and autonomy given to teachers. The authors suggested that teachers deserved, and should be given, respect to motivate them for quality performance, capacity building through training and re-training and similar ranking with other professions. Issues identified are critical in view of Tolu-Kolawole's report on the lamentation of TRCN's Registrar on poor attendance of teachers at TRCN Conference. The TRCN found it difficult to attract partners and sponsors for its conference while teachers could not get sponsorship from their employers. This is a very serious challenge for the teaching profession. In a similar vein, Akuezilo (2006), identified attitudinal problems and the demands of information technology (IT) as key impediments to teachers' professionalization. Teachers require extensive training in the use of IT tools to assist in the collation, presentation and transmission of knowledge and values in the classroom.

Another major challenge is the large population of unqualified teachers in the Nigeria's educational industry. The TRCN has been working assiduously to halt this trend. For instance, TRCN collaborated with some universities to commence Professional Diploma in Education (PDE). It also approved of over seven Colleges of Education and more Colleges and Universities were coming on board. But since the introduction of the programme in 2008, there had not been marked improvement. The Registrar of the TRCN declared at its 2023 MCPD that over 50% of teachers in private schools in southwest Nigeria are not qualified (Kenechi, 2023).



Elujekwute, Oigocha, Okoh and Umar appraised the problems facing teacher education in Nigeria. The authors similarly identified challenges to teacher education to include poor funding, professionalization of teaching, low morale of teachers, brain drain syndrome, lack of quality assurance in teacher education, insufficient knowledge of ICT, poor continuous assessment practice and changing trends in teachers' image, these problems identified constituted a cog in the TRCN's performance. Teachers are the largest single group of profession in Nigeria. the challenge to TRCN is how to professionalize the group given them many challenges it faces.

### **Conclusion**

TRCNA 2004 is enacted to professionalize teaching personnel in Nigeria. Its duties include registration, accreditation, training and re-training, and discipline of teachers in the Nigerian educational system. This is a very laudable project that promises to determine who a teacher is, identifies the problems a teacher faces, registers and streamlines his qualifications and embarks and issues a licence in evidence of it. Moreover, teaching is a dynamic and highly interactive profession that requires transmission of knowledge skills and values. Teachers' knowledge, skills and values require constant updating.

Many challenges were identified in this study confronting the vision and mission of the TRCN Act. First, the attitude of the government towards teaching profession. TRCN Act was passed in 1993, it took seven years for it to become operational in April 2020. Second, no professional association in Nigeria has the population of persons TRCN is to register. Other challenges such as poor remuneration, low morals etcetera confront the profession. It could be concluded that for TRCN accomplish its mission, the Council should create more awareness to the public on its programmes. In addition, the Council must set up monitoring committee for the employment of qualified teachers in schools.

### **Recommendations**

The study's recommendations are to all stakeholders. The Act is indigently drafted Compared to other professional legislations; the entire provisions of the Act appear like a hasty exercise. It is recommended that the Act should be repealed and replaced with another one that would address all issues of teaching profession in a more decorous manner. Both the federal and state governments could legislate on education in Nigeria. These tiers of government are advised to pay more attention to the issues of poor salary structure, low morale, low social epileptic payment of salaries and incessant strike actions to assist the TRCN on its mandate of developing dedicated professional teachers for inclusive education.

1. Proprietors of tertiary institutions (public and private) should make sure that only trained teachers in the appropriate disciplines are recruited to work in their institutions.
2. TRCN itself needs to embark on more enlightenment campaigns to make teachers' aware of its programmes and criteria for registration, accreditation and licensing.

3. Teachers as beneficiaries of professionalism under the Act should co-operate with the TRCN by submitting their qualifications for assessment and accreditation for registration. They should prioritise the attendance at MCPD of the professional body.

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### **Legislations**

- Teachers' Registration Council Act, Cap T3, Law of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004
- Medical and Dental Practitioners Act, Cap M8 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004
- Legal Practitioners Act Cap 207 Law of Federation of Nigeria 2004
- Council of Legal Education Act Cap 206, Law of Federation of Nigeria