EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND INNOVATION IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: WAY FORWARD FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Osagiede, Mercy Afe
Department of Primary Education Studies,
College of Education, Agbor.

Idiaghe, J. E. (Ph.D)
Department of Primary Education Studies,
College of Education, Agbor.

Abstract
Reform measures in education are aimed towards changes in the existing educational situations, where existing policy no longer meet the needs of the people. Reforms in teacher education in Nigeria have become imperative because of the important position of teacher education in the Nigerian educational system. The paper focuses on the need to use reforms in teacher education to revive the present fallen standard in the educational industry. Some reform dimensions in teacher education were highlighted as ways forward to ensuring quality and standard education in Nigeria so that Nigeria will not be left behind by a world that is always on the move.

Introduction
The indispensable role played by education in every nation's social, economic and political development has been acknowledged without dispute in today's world. It is one of the biggest industries in Nigeria that touches on every fabric of a human endeavour.

Nigeria inherited the colonial system of education without any consideration for the environment and the socio-cultural background of the Nigeria society. But with time, the irrelevancy of the British oriented curriculum in Nigeria started to attract questions and debate when, it became obvious that the education system bequeathed to Nigerians lacked values and did not address the socio-economic needs of an independent Nigeria. The realization of all these gave rise to educational reforms in Nigeria.

Reform in teacher education which is the trust of this paper has become imperative because teachers are the builders of other professions. It is only when teacher education curriculum and other relevant areas are strengthened that the whole educational system can be enhanced for economic, social and political growth of our nation Nigeria.
The Concept of Education

Education is seen as a production function, a bundle of inputs to achieve certain outputs and outcomes. It is a process by which every society attempts to preserve and upgrade the accumulated knowledge, skills and attitudes in the dynamic society.

Education as a concept has enjoyed a considerable level of acceptance globally. It implies the development stale of a person that involves knowledge and understanding in depth and breath of the world around him, which is in constant state of dynamism. It is a learning to live as useful and acceptable members of the community.

Whatever way one may look at the concept education, Akinpelu. (1981:184), summarized education thus:

- A conscious effort to bring about a desirable changes;
- A change that is intentional, deliberate and purposeful;
- Knowledge and understanding; and
- A method of transmission that is morally acceptable.

Akinpelu's definition reveals that education is a strategy for reform and the only way for every society to meet with the tide of global changes and development is through reforms.

The Concept of Reform

Reform generally is a synonym for change and it has become a global phenomenon. It is a plan or movement, which attempts to bring about a systematic change in educational theory or practice across a community or society.

Reform is multi-facet in nature. It means different thing to different people thus, it is an applied concept depending on the individual perspectives. It is the catchword of every political animal, the secular gospel of our economic free-enterprise system and a new slogan in all our cultural activities. It is simply an act to improve a system, an organization. A reform is a deliberate effort, a planned action introduced into human society to modify, strengthen, or change an existing system for better result.

Hornby - (2004:983) perceives reform as an action made to improve a system, an organization, a law etc by making change to it. It also involves forming something again, especially into a different group or pattern. Form the word, reform it could be deduced to mean form again; Shape again; Pattern again, etc into different ways. It also means that something was already formed before, but could not meet up the present reality, hence, the need to re-pattern it to be relevant to the time.

Reform does not mean that we should throw away all existing practices and replace them with new ones. Instead, it denotes a strategy, which involves strong and good practices and adding new ones that arc proven to be efficacious. Reform can even be seen as doing the same thing but in refreshingly new way. It can also imply being proactive and imaginative, so that problems could be anticipated and tackled before they become multifarious (Ciwar, 2007:4). Therefore society cannot
do without reforms. Similarly, reforms cannot do without education.

**Meaning of Educational Reform**

The meaning of educational reform is made clearer when people understand the forces that stimulate changes. Most of these forces arose from varied stakeholders who may be external to educational system that often times operate as gatekeepers of vested interests. Therefore educational reform is a deliberate and planned process of renewal, re-organization, refocusing, restructuring, modification, transformation, change, tailored towards the higher improvement and development of service for the benefit of all stakeholders and society at large both on the short and long run (Nwadiani 2007, Babalola 2006).

Obanya (2004), equates educational reforms with some kinds of re-thinking. In his words *From a re-thinking of various building blocks of a nation (political social and economic considerations) should emerge issues concerned with the place and role of Education*. This implies that reform in education arises from discontentment in educational output in the political, social and economic life of the nation.

**Types of Educational Reforms**

There are basically four types of educational reform these are

1. Radical reform
2. Realistic-revolutionary reform
3. Ad hoc reform
4. Evolutionary reform

In radical reform as the name implies, attempts to break wish the past for instance, having sorted their independence, some African countries completely severed educational links with their colonial lords. Realistic revolutionary reform endorses the steps in radical reform, but it is done with caution. In realistic revolutionary reform much light has to be thrown on the limitations of the existing system. This implies that the inadequacies of the existing system have to clearly portray its irrelevance to the needs and interest of the people and society. A good example of this is the pre-independence Nigerian educational system, which became irrelevant to the post-independence Nigerian society.

An ad-hoc reform according to Obanya (2004), is *the type of educational reform, which tends to address just one issue at a time without an organic link with related problems*.

An evolutionary reform is conservative in nature because, it insists that reform be left alone to chart a natural course, despite its acknowledgement of the inadequacies in the existing education policies and practices.

**The Concept of Teacher Education**

Teacher education is an important aspect of education where teachers are given pre-service teacher preparation, upgrading of academic qualification and In-service Continuing professional development in particular subject, content areas and instruction methods.

According to Okafor (1988), Teacher Education is the formal, systematic and organized training
programme geared towards production of a crop of required manpower (teachers) to implement the planned and developed curriculum of schools in a society.

Whawo (1994), stated that, teacher education may be divided into two stages - pre-service and in service training. To him, pre-service teacher education embraces all the stages of education and training that precede the employment of a teacher to teach in a school system. While in-service education refers to the education and training that the teacher receives after the person has been employed into the teaching job. The Federal Government on the realization of the importance of teacher education, had specified in the National Policy on Education (2004), section 56 (a) that since no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers, teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis in all educational planning and development. It also stated categorically that (he minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession should be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE).

- That all teachers shall be professionally trained;
- That all teachers shall continue to take cognizance of change in methodology and in the curriculum;
- That teacher shall regularly be exposed to innovations in their professions;
- That effort will be made towards the improvement of (he quality of education at the primary and secondary levels.

This shall include:

(a) Appointment of academically and professionally qualified person as teachers and head teachers.
(b) Regular in-service training programmes for teachers and head teachers.

Objectives of Teacher Education in Nigeria.

The major purpose or objectives of teacher education in Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) shall be to:

(a) Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all level of our education system;
(b) Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
(c) Help teachers to fit into social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals.
(d) Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them their adaptable to changing situation.
(e) Enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.

Subsection 58 of the national policy on education further stated that all teachers shall be professionally trained. Teacher education programmes shall be structured to equip teachers for the effective performance of their duties.
Teacher Education and Educational Reform

Education helps man to be aware of himself and his environment. He also becomes curious about the world around him through the process of social interaction with his fellow students, teachers and materials in the classroom environment. It is the teacher that guides the child as he/she interacts with his environment, for this reason, it is important to consider the importance of the teacher in the classroom, and his roles in educational reform.

The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) aptly opined that, No Education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The teacher is the pivot of success in any educational system. Teachers' roles in developing the students include having interactive behaviour with the students in order to bring about effective, cognitive and psychomotor changes in them. The central figure in education has been the teacher, this explains why every educational reform that worth its salt, does not leave out the professional advancement of the teacher.

The teacher task is to pass on the knowledge, skill and the relevant discipline as received from customs, and children are to receive these with all the docility and obedience at their disposal (Hembe, 1998). This implies that teaching is a two-way process involving the teacher and learner, the teacher impacts skills while the learner/student is the recipient and applies the knowledge in preparation for future responsibilities in life and to the society.

The importance of teaching in our society today is paramount because, it has helped to mould, train and retain leaders, scientists, engineers, doctors etc and all professionals who have contributed to the development of the nations in terms of technological, socio-economic, scientific and political advancement.

However, it can be said that the present state of teaching is deteriorating due to negligence on the part of teachers to pursue further study in their academic career, poor reading habit and some teachers still prefer to use old textbooks. All these call for the need for educational reforms in Teacher education in Nigeria.

For education reform in Teacher Education to have meaning, Educational reforms in teacher education must address many problems of teacher education through educational reforms, if the current fallen standard of education will be solved. On the issue of the fallen standard of education in Nigeria, Amucheazi (2000), Lamented thus:

The standard of education in this country has fallen to a very low level although, some educationists contend this claim; But our everyday encounter with products of our educational institutions confirm (heir poor quality. Some of (hem can not express themselves in simple English while some do not seem to have acquired much skill from the schools, some universities outside our shores now insist on the graduates of our Universities passing qualifying- examinations before they admit -them for post graduate work (page 6).
The above lamentation culs for the need to overhaul the educational system. To do this, efforts must first be made to reform the present state of teacher education in Nigeria through appropriate educational reforms.

Reasons why Previous Educational Reform failed in Nigeria

The teacher is at the center stage of classroom instruction. For any educational reform to be meaningful, adequate planning must precede the implementation of all the educational innovation and changes. Most of the reforms in education in the past have failed because some of the reform agenda never left the planning stage.

Planning by policy makers often ignore those who are to implement the policies. Any educational reform that precludes others who are affected by the changes is bound to fail. Educational reform planners must work with those who will execute the plan (teachers).

For any meaningful reform to work in other facets of the educational industry, teacher education must first undergo a reform since it is widely believed that teachers are the builders of other professions.

In Nigeria, the success of educational reforms have failed largely due to:

1. Lack of political 'will' on the part of government to implement the educational objectives as contained in the constitution.
2. Inability of government to adequately fund the education sector.
3. Inadequate provision of facilities to support education excellence.
4. Lack of sufficient and qualified manpower to man the schools. This trend is observed from primary to tertiary levels of our education sector.
5. The continued control of government over the tertiary institutions despite declaration in the policy document.
6. Many intended reform were never implemented.
7. Even if an attempt at implementation was made it failed to be completed or achieve a minimum critical mass so as to have an impact.

Nwadiani In (1995) x-rayed the Nigerian based problems in education reform implementation these are:

- The cart before the Horse Syndrome.
- Poor functional differentiation
- Week data base
- Reform goals don't match reality
- Inadequate resources
- Unprogressive administrative tradition
- Polities and week political will.
- Lack of public understanding and support
- Poor commitment.

The Need for Educational Reform in Teacher Education

The need for a reform in teacher education arose from the malformation of the present school system in Nigeria. The general purpose of teacher education reform is to enable the teacher develop the skills and qualities that will increase his
Educational Reforms and Innovation in Teacher Professional Effectiveness. In Nigeria, the teacher in the assessment of Ogbonnaya (2003), constitutes the most important single category of high level or skilled manpower requirement. Thus there is need for proper teacher education reform, to enable him succeed in his professional practice. With the reform programme the teacher has to enter into the spirit of the new Nigerian age, willing to share new skills and information with his fellow teachers, seek more knowledge on his own initiative and above all, grow flexible and willing to experiment without fear of failure.

Consequent on the above, the flexibility of such new or reformed teachers is to be built into his total professional and academic make-up. He is to be helped to keep abreast of new techniques, skills and research in his fields. Indeed, it is this idea that informed the Federal Government of Nigeria to state in its education policy document that, teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum. Teachers shall regularly be exposed to innovations in their profession (FRN, 2004:40).

Okpala (2000), affirms in his research report that, an individual is considered educated if he is cultured and contributing positively to the development of his society. He added that, there is need to reform Nigeria teacher education in order to expose both the teacher and the student - teacher to a wealth of related cognitive knowledge and affective experience. The dictum is true that a poor teacher tells, while an average teacher informs; a good teacher teaches, while an excellent teacher inspires. The Nigeria school system is in dire need of excellent teachers to inspire confidence, into the teaching profession in the country. The need for crop of excellent teachers can only be produced through effective teacher education programme. It is in this context that the Federal Government of Nigeria deems it wise to explicate the policy that would guide Nigeria teacher education reform.

In Nigeria, teacher education proposal include:

1. Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for changing situations, but in most of our educational institutions today, there are still a lot of mediocre and non-performers. For the Nigeria to have quality and standard, there is need for a reform agenda to improve the quality and quality of the teaching staff in the Nigeria institutions.

2. To improve upon the prestige, status of the teaching staff and give it a professional outlook, certain basic structural reforms are strongly advocated in the Nigeria teacher education programmes.

Dimensions of Educational Reform in Teacher Education as Way Forward to Achieve Quality Education in Nigeria.

Educational reform must address some general and specific problems in teacher education today, if reforms are to have meaning. Areas of problems in
Reform in teacher education curriculum needs a curriculum transformation that is pragmatic and child-centred, that is apt in rejuvenating and rekindling hope and passion for acquisition of broad based knowledge. E.g the Aligned curriculum of UBE newly developed in Nigeria.

2. Reform the Method of Teacher Preparation: Teacher competence and preparation are fundamental issues that must be properly addressed if our education system must be transformed from the present level of decay to standards that member nations could respect. (Ciwar, 2007:1). To this end, the reform effort should be aimed at strengthening ICT Competencies In Teacher Education Programmes. In recognition of the pivotal role of teachers in education, the most Successful Educational Reform would likely be the one that addresses first and foremost, the actual performance of teachers in the field. This is because the teachers hold the key to educational quality.

Reform the Objectives of Teacher Education.

Any reform in Education should first address the objectives to be pursued. Such objectives must be guided by the society's needs and challenged. The first step in this direction is the identification and prioritization of the need of Nigerian as a nation.

In this regards, reforms are focused on the goals, objectives and function of Education and improving their practices.

Reform the Content of Teacher Education Curriculum

The content of the education delivery process must necessary undergo transformation to be able to address new goals and objectives based on the new problems, challenges and needs. The curriculum content of what is to be offered in the school should be able to make school leavers at whatever level useful in modern techniques, which they can put to practical use. The content of education should be able to offer training in specific area as highlighted under educational objective above. Such training should equip the trainee with useful skills and knowledge, which he/she can properly apply to his own use and for national development. Reforms in the content of education must reflect the learning needs of the different levels of the teacher education system. The overall content of education must be such that will guarantee sustainable improvement in the material welfare of learners by being able to eliminate ignorance, and poverty in the
long run and engender self-reliance and nation development.

**Reform the Methodology of Educational Delivery**

Educational delivery methods and techniques are becoming increasingly obsolete, with improved technologies. The present teaching methods are devoid of innovative teaching approaches. New methods such as the use of projectors, televisions, collaborative learning, and problem based learning; self directed learning must therefore replace the obsolete techniques and methods of teaching through appropriate teacher education reform programmes. (Agabi, 1999, Dike 2007).

**Reform the Organization and Management of Teacher Education,**

In this regards aspects of educational organization and administration such as structure, control, funding and resource allocation, accountability, logistics and constrains form the basis of any reform.

With the new content ancB. methods, the organization and management of education must also undergo reform to fall in line with the new realities. Quite often when new policies are adopted. Many people tend to fall back to think that the problem has been solved. Little is known that the process of implementation is just as crucial as any other phase of the policy. For any reform agenda in education to be successful, the task and responsibilities, and structure of educational managers/administrator must also undergo reform to take advantage of knowledge possessed by better trained teachers and administrators.

If the Nigerian education system is to be reformed in conformity with international standards and to keep pace with current trends, the following suggestion are also advanced:-  
1. Nigeria must start with a good and targeted policy on reform like other developed countries  
2. The funding of the educational sector should be of top-most priority to government of all levels.  
3. There must be a deliberate policy on the provision of sufficient and quality facilities to all educational institutions.  
4. There must be recruitment of enough and qualified teachers at all levels.  
5. The emphasis of the National Policy document on teacher education reform, is more on teacher's academic education than on his preparation for teaching. There should be a balance of emphasis as not to emphasize the teacher's academic education to the detriment of his teaching preparation. The teacher must use his teaching and code of conduct to inspire his educants, bearing in mind that, it is not only in chemical laboratory alone that wrong labeling can lead to serious disaster and death. It could do so too in the education process.

**Conclusion**

Education is the major tool can help to solve major problems raised by other areas of the nations' life. It is a very big business affecting the live of
everybody. Since the world has become more dynamic than ever before, educational reform to meet contemporary changes and realities is imperative. However, it should not be delayed not-done in a hurry without adequate planning. No nation can ever rise above the quality of its teachers; because education, which is one of the biggest industries in the globe which touches virtually all fabrics of human endeavour lies in the hands of the teachers. Any educational reform that fails to penetrate the classroom is bound to fail to improve educational quality.

For the educational system in Nigeria to have meaning and standard, there is need to reform the present structures and forms of teacher education in Nigeria so as to be able to compete with favourably with other nations of the world in terms of technological growth and development.

Reform in teacher education is a worthwhile venture because whatever we reform today, we are reforming for future so that the children of today will play their productive roles in society of years to come.

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