

## ENHANCED TEACHER EDUCATION FOR A QUALITATIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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### **Abstract**

This presentation is concerned with enhanced teacher education that will bring about qualitative higher education in Nigeria. In order to understand these issues in this presentation clearly the paper discussed the usefulness of higher education in Nigeria, who is a teacher? The role of teachers in the school and the society, as well as the challenges in teacher education. The paper equally discussed some plans or principles needed to be able to achieve educational enhancement in the nations education system. The paper exposted that in the context of providing functional higher education in Nigeria, effective teacher education has enormous role to play. Finally the paper recommended among other things the improvement of teacher quality for better higher education in Nigeria to include improved welfare and working conditions so as to attract the best brains into the teaching profession in Nigeria.

**Keywords-:** Enhanced, Teacher, Advancement, qualitative, Education and Challenges.

Considering the strategic importance of teacher education to the enhancement and innovations to higher education in Nigeria, this paper focused on changes to improve teacher education with a view to making the profession attractive. Teaching is a specialized activity that is directed at developing learners intellectual skills in certain positive direction. Teaching is difficult for many reasons and the most glaring of them all is that human behavior is complete and once it is established, it is hard to modify and difficult to change especially if one is not equipped to do so. This is why teaching as a professional must attract highly intellectual man power, because the ability to change the behavior of a learner involves great expertise.

Education would be seen as a complete process, if features such as, human being, society, behavior, values and transmission are all involved in educational activity of preserving, developing and transmitting the culture of a people from one generation to another. Whatever the case may be, Dosunmu (2006) is of the view that “the main goal of education is to prepare the right type of environment for the individual, to allow him grow physically, mentally and spiritually in order that he can develop harmoniously within and at the same time together with his fellow human beings. From this definition by Dosumu, a factor must be responsible for the growth of the learner physically, mentally and spiritually. This nous resides mostly on a well trained teacher, who understands innovation as a priority when changing the behavior of a learner. The world has always needed innovation from the invention of the wheel to the invention of the car, the telephone, the television and many more we have profited from the manifestations of the innovative spirit. Today, for our educational system to experience change, innovation must occur at all stages of planning process and

in all the corners of the educational system. To achieve standard is not about changing the system only because as complex as the learning process, administrator's need all teachers at all levels to participate in finding new ways to strength the system. WAEC result has just been released and the story is the same "a marginal decline" in the overall performances. The teacher is a motivator; he is exposed to adopt various strategies o motivate learners to learn better. He is to arouse and sustain their interest in the learning process through appropriate enforcement of various kinds. The irony of it all is that the suppose motivator is not motivated by his or her employer in any way. It is pertinent to note here that the most fundamental issue is that Nigerian teachers of all levels both serving and those in training must be motivated to participate in the development revolution which our nation is embarking upon.

The long term effects of poor quality teacher education are better imagined than experienced. If we accept that no education system can rise above the quality of its teacher and we know that education is the catalyst for all spheres of human development, then it follows that a country that operates poor quality teacher education will perpetually remain under developed and thus suffers the consequences of underdevelopment. This is so because the education system that cannot better the quality of teacher education will in return have a system that cannot equip the students. The end result would then be a production of a large army of unskilled youth. Such situation will lead to all sorts of anti – social behavior such as thuggery, armed robbery, militancy and other violent crimes as is being experienced today in the country.

#### **The Usefulness of Higher Education in Nigeria**

Higher education in the country is a place where the learner's mind is further trained with the aim of improving the quality of human life. According to Okafor (2014) "higher education possess a higher capacity to train the human mind to make dormant and latent resources active and bring some utilitarian values to an otherwise neglected apparatus of development". From Okafor's view, higher education is expected to prepare the world of work. Higher education is an aspect of learning that brings the learner into specialized area of skill acquisition that will make him have themeans to earn a living in life.

Higher education in Nigeria helps to equip students with the requisite skills and knowledge to translate ideas into acceptable products. Through higher education, the system critically understands what a problem really is before thinking about solving it. Higher education can clearly bring about poverty alleviation, self – reliance which is a prelude to self sufficiency and employment generation, if these institutions can really carry out their purpose for establishment, the afore mentioned will be achievable where there is quality in higher education; higher education is supposed to be synonymous with standard, efficiency, excellence, relevance, worthiness etc, in a worthwhile teaching and learning environment. With higher education, Nigerian graduates are supposed to be well equipped with the technological know – how. But the big question is how equipped are the teachers of these higher institutions. This will lead us to the question, who is a teacher?

### **Who is a Teacher?**

A teacher is assumed to be an individual with a whole body of knowledge to be transmitted to the learner. The Longman dictionary of contemporary English describes a teacher as a person who gives knowledge or skill training or lesson in a particular subject. The teacher is responsible for influencing a learning experience opportunity. According to Ugbede (2004) by and large a teacher can be defined as a person (specialist) who leads the learner to acquire new knowledge, skills, capabilities and all other forms of behaviors and the society at large. The implication of this definition is that the teacher is a builder, who builds on the learners experiences and gives them the experiences that will make them function in the society. This means that the teacher is a transformer, because he has to change the existing knowledge of the students through creative ability. The teacher knows that for behavioral change to take place, he needs to apply innovative skills to rejuvenate the student's season after season.

Adewuyi, Abodunrin and Ogunwuyi (2004) see the teacher as one who is assigned the responsibility of transmitting to the present generation the accumulated knowledge and value of the past and thus interpreting the information with reference to the present with a view to modifying and improving the future. For any person to be seen as a good teacher, he needs to possess a number of characteristics that endears him to the students and society. Again, Adewuyi, Abodunrin and Ogunwuyi (2004) presented the following laudable qualities which an individual should acquire through qualitative and genuine teacher education as;

- Patience and conscientiousness
- Kindness and understanding
- Master of his subject matter
- Readiness to learn
- Knowledge of his pupils
- Firmness
- Possession of good – character, neatness and activeness

### **Role of the Teacher in School and the Society**

Role is a duty or responsibility. According to Hornby (2006) it is a function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organization, in society or in a relationship. The teacher must first be seen as a person who is knowledgeable, a person that can change a learner's behavior for them to be able to recognize the limitations of their current knowledge and perspectives. Teaching is not all about unheeding of a teacher's ideas on students, but what is required is a true transformation of students existing knowledge. For a good teacher to do this, he must possess these qualities to be able to perform his roles in the school and the society.

❖ ***The Teacher must have Leadership Quality:*** This quality will help the teacher to change his students in class and the society, because through him the students and the society can acquire new knowledge and skills on how to better their lot. Leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration that is motivated by passion and generated through vision. A good teacher must know how

to inspire and understand where to source inspiration from, to ensure that the instructional objectives are achieved.

❖ ***The Teacher must be Purpose Driven:*** A good teacher cannot exist without a sense of purpose. A teacher who has purpose will have sense of significance. This quality will encourage the teacher to adopt various strategies to be able to motivate his learners to learn better. A good teacher is hidden in his purpose and it is this quality that drives his passion for the job. And as mentioned earlier a good teacher must be patient, kind, confident, neat, firm, be ready to learn, be disciplined etc. these are what the school, students and the society expect from the teacher. And as Ugbede (2004) puts it “the teacher must therefore inculcate the precepts and examples of the highest regards for morality and all other virtues.

❖ ***The Teacher must be Innovative:*** A good teacher does not resist change, but rather contributes to it. The nature of a good teacher is to take the learners through a world of yet undiscovered ways to instructional objectives achievement. A good teacher must possess the capacity to combine old ideas and concepts in order to create new ones. This quality makes him a curriculum planner; the teacher is in the grassroots of the educational system, this gives him the advantage to know more about the needs of the learner. The teacher interacts with the students in the class and in the school; his experiences make him enhance educational planning and development.

The role of the teacher to the school and the society cannot be over emphasized because they are the heart of the school and the society. They prepare and feed every facet of human endeavor with the needed skills and knowledge that will help to pilot the needed development strategies that will bring development to the society. The teacher is undoubtedly, the most important variable in the application of education. So, any society without this form of formal education will be affected negatively and this will consequently affect development.

### **Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

In Nigeria teaching has become an all – comer’s affairs. This is so because the government does not recognize the importance of the teaching profession and as such the important role which teachers play in all the education process is never appreciated.

In advanced countries of the world according to Bello (2011) “only people who have successfully undergone a professional teaching training course and who also have the necessary academic qualification are allowed to teach at certain levels in the educational system”.

Teacher education is the provision of professional education and specialized training within a specified period for the preparation of individual who intends to develop and nurture the young ones into responsible and productive citizens. According to Bawa & Ejime (2013) teacher education is the “professional training of teachers in college of education, faculties of education and institutes of education” teacher education is a specified performance designed to prepare individuals who will eventually become teachers to teach children and wards in school. In another vein Ihebereme and

Maduewesi (2008) see teacher education as “articulately planned and systematized procedure for the initial preparation and future training and re – training of teachers”. They went further to say that teacher education can be of two complimentary parts.

1. The pre – service component in which a prospective teacher is equipped with the fundamental skills, knowledge, competence to get him started or to launch him into the teaching job as a beginning teacher.
2. The in – service component in which the teachers’ skills, knowledge and competencies needed to accommodate the quantum developments in teacher education evolved by technology and societal dynamism are sharpened.

Teachers’ education too has been populated by individuals who are not actually interested in the profession but are there by circumstances beyond their control. The reason being that of the unattractive working condition in the profession. Good and prospective candidates avoid teaching like a plague. The best brains in the vocation leave in search of greener pastures elsewhere. And according to one time former honourable minister of education, Borishade (2002) it is because of the “Pitiable status of teachers low morale, job dissatisfaction, poor rewards, dwindling job opportunities, job insecurity, falling standard of education, loss of glory and credibility of teaching professional and dwindling esteem of the teachers, low rating of graduates of Nigerian educational institutions and their qualifications by international community as reflected in the requirement for passing qualifying examination for Nigerian graduates before being admitted for further studies abroad and the massive retraining when appointed by international organizations”. There are others who have similar observations about our teacher education system. Yekini (2014) observed that “this stigma may have been from the pariah status accorded the teacher training education in the country by all and sundry. It may have been from the inglorious nomenclature of teachers ascribed to its instructors. It may have been from the admission requirement into the colleges which are relatively lower than that of universities and polytechnics there by suggesting inferiority” it is very unfortunate that in Nigeria teacher education as earlier observed have been taken over by weak or weakest persons in view of the requirement for admission into the Nigerian teacher education institutions. If we must achieve quality in teacher education in Nigeria, it should be desirable of us that those to be trained as teachers should be materials of good quality. Colleges of Education in Nigeria today are left with the responsibility of producing the bulk of teachers for the primary and post –primary schools. As observed by Madueke (1996) the present admission requirements into these colleges tend to create the impression that only the rejectees of other tertiary institutions could easily be admitted into the NCE programme”. From the foregoing, it is very clear that the major challenge of teacher education is their entry requirements into either faculty or school of education in tertiary institutions is low when compared to other professional courses. It is due to the poor entry qualification that results into garbage in garbage out. Baike (2002) has stated that “teachers in the country are selected from failure”. His statement is not wrong, because when a youngster fails to get admission into university to study any of those enviable courses, his next point of call is the faculty of education in that school or he goes into teacher training institutions and these crops of students will eventually be employed into teaching profession upon graduation. The end result will then be ruining of the nations educational system due to their academic backwardness.

Another major challenge facing teacher education is that of uncondusive learning environment and unfavourable working conditions. Teachers work under uncondusive learning environments across the country. The problems affecting educational institutions are either the same or similar, this includes dilapidated structures and facilities for teaching, learning and research, low morale among staff and students. The Nigerian educational system is full of ups and downs. The performance of our students in internal and external examinations is appalling. There have been talks about the state of education in this country. While some say it is the standard that has collapsed as a whole, some are of the opinion that it is the system that has collapsed. They are both correct, the learning environment is known to exert powerful influence on human learning and development. Unfortunately today in Nigeria, all our higher institutions are very uncondusive. Factors responsible for all these have been stated in this paper. Not quite long the academic staff unions of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education had to close down their institutions for between six (6) and eleven (11) months. The implication of this is that at the end day the students and system will be short-changed, because these institutions will want to cover the lost period thereby using what is now known as crash programme.

### **The Way Forward for Higher Education Enhancement in Nigeria**

Considering the fact that good brains find it difficult to remain in the teaching profession, government should target teacher development for the consolidation of quality enhancement in higher education in Nigeria. This can be achieved through improved massive funding that will include welfare package, good working conditions and introduction of incentives at all levels of our educational system for teachers. When this is in place, the profession will naturally be attractive to the best brains. This had been suggested for more than four decades ago by Fafuwa (1969) he rightly observed that “unless the remunerations of teachers are improved and made attractive, students of good quality will hardly be attracted for training to become teachers”.

Another area to be looked into is the condition for admission, that is the entry requirement for students into faculties of education in the universities and students going into colleges of education. The National Policy of Education (2004 Revised) states it clearly that “no system of education can rise above the quality of its teachers”. The meaning of this is that the best students from ordinary level certificates should be admitted first into the teacher education programme. The admission requirements in the Joint Admission and Matriculation Board Examinations (JAMB) into faculties of education and the colleges of education should be made the same with other professional courses in the universities, so that this mentality of teacher education being the last option will then be eradicated. Teachers are the translators of the national policies into action, and so they should be seen and taken serious. Government must invest on the teacher education because of their role in the school and the society at large. This is the reason why Ukeje (1991:4) posited that; “the education of the teacher should be the priority of any country wishing to develop in all branches of human endeavour. If we are serious about the reconstruction of the Nigerian society, then we must first accept our present ills, then design and articulate the future we want and adequately finance an appropriate educational system with particular reference to teacher education”.

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In the aspect of recruitment and selection, if the educational system must be improved upon let this aspect be done with great transparency and integrity for quality and productively of the entire system. When a well – qualified teacher is absorbed into the teaching profession, high standard will then be ensured. Apart from teaching in the classroom, the teachers in teacher training institutions participate in teaching practice. The exercise is a compulsory aspect of the teacher education. But a situation where unqualified personels are engaged, how can teaching practice be well supervised.

#### **Conclusions**

Nigeria has placed undue emphasis on certificate and that is why most schools today end up producing certificated quarks as teachers to worsen the already weak standard of our educational system. For qualitative higher education advancement, the foundations where these products will emerge from must be well guaranteed. This implies that the teaching and learning environment, which include the setting, the physical and conceptual, where teaching and learning exercises to be carried out must be deliberately planned to rejuvenate the flagging and awakening realities of modern development in the industry.

If the arguments on the inadequacies and the short comings surrounding teacher education in this country as examined by this presentation are corrected and properly implemented, teacher education will begin to experience mass return of the best brain into the teaching profession.

#### **Recommendations**

To further enhance teacher education for a qualitative higher education in Nigeria the following recommendations are proffered.

- ❖ Governments at all levels should give unconditional opportunities to teachers at all levels of our school system with particular attention to teacher education lecturers to attend seminars, workshops, conferences and further studies with a view to keeping them abreast with new developments. This would have multiplier effect on the students for the improvement of the quality of our education.
- ❖ The system should ensure that admission of candidates is based on merit in all subject areas such that the selection of intelligent, qualified and interested student teachers into schools and colleges would lead to the production of sound teachers.
- ❖ Government at all levels should strongly be interested in the improvement of teacher quality for better higher education in Nigeria. For example improved welfare packages, good working conditions and environments so as to attract the best brains into the teaching professions.
- ❖ Politicization of our educational system should be stopped. The government at the federal and state levels should let chairmen of councils know that politic is not to be played with or in our educational system. In the case of recruitments most council chairmen and members do insist that their candidates be employed whether they are qualified or not. This idea is not helping the system.

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