

# PLIGHT OF EDUCATION AND STATUS OF TEACHERS IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES.

*Dr. Elizabeth Ngozi Chukwuemeka and Etuosisochkwu Perpetua Ojike-Chijioke,*

## **Abstract**

*This paper examines the problems and prospects of education in Nigeria. Education is the bedrock of development. But unfortunately, Education in Nigeria is bisected with myriads of problems. These includes; poor funding and thus poor educational infrastructures, inadequate classrooms, teaching aids (projectors, Computers, Laboratories and libraries), paucity of quality teachers and poor / polluted learning environment. In addition to these inadequacies, our school system is plagued with numerous social vices such as examination malpractices, cultism, hooliganism and corruption. For meaningful development to take place in the educational sector; the government needs to readdress the issue of funding. Private educational investors, teachers! Parents/guidance and students/pupils need a reorientation towards achieving the goals of education. Also education must be made affordable for all and sundry. The current monolithic approach to knowledge acquisition must be changed. Technical education and innovation/ adaptation centers must be encouraged and well funded, if this nation must move out of this present technological and scientific dependence. Government and the organized private sector must as well fund research programmes, inventions and mass production of invented products.*

## **Introduction**

Education is an inevitable tool for sustainable development and a vehicle for advancing the frontier of knowledge (Abdul-Kareem, 2021). In this regard, education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. The potency of education is more evident in its globalization trends combined with instrumental values of nurturing productive citizens for sustainable development and democracy. Education has been recognized as a process of imparting knowledge, skills and attitudes to the learners. Teachers' influence is always felt in every aspect of the society. The effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers. According to (Ukeje, 1988 in Wanekezi, Okoli and Mezieobi, 2011), education unlocks the door to modernization and sustainable development but, it is the teacher that holds the key to the door. Thus, the teacher has the responsibility of translating educational policies into practice and programmes into action. It is clear from the foregoing that the role of the teacher in sustainable development cannot be quantified, especially in training personnel in various areas of the workforce. For national development and peaceful co-existence to be attained, there is need to give priority to investment in human capital through teacher education and training. The Nigerian educational system needs to be responsive to the technological social and economic needs of the society and provide the type of human resources needed in the industrial and economic

sector. Therein comes the role of effective teacher education programme to translate the needed skills, knowledge and attitudes to meet their needs and the societal ones.

### **Background of the Study**

The quality or standard of education in Nigeria has reduced in recent years because of, among other factors, the brain drain phenomenon, (i.e., the drift of many brilliant, intelligent and more experienced teachers and university lecturers to countries where they were offered better remunerations and conditions of service). This syndrome is, to a large extent, attributable to inadequate incentives, poorly equipped education system in an increasingly hostile working environments, inadequate social recognition, delay in payment (and sometimes denial) of teachers' salaries, among others. The reliance on inexperienced, and in some cases unqualified teachers and lecturers in the various educational fields and institutions in the country definitely affects the quality of students' work, and of graduates who are eventually employed to service the educational manpower needs, as well as the economy. This vicious circle contributes to the lowering status of education in the universities, colleges of education as well as secondary and primary schools (Osokoya, 2012), even as the trend impacts on the economy negatively.

Many teachers in Nigeria have not measured up to the minimum international standard. This is because a large number of untrained and half-baked personnel are still retained in the system, leading to a scenario in which career in teaching is not yet professionalized. Many unqualified teachers are still in the employment of some States Teaching Service Boards, while most higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes this training mandatory and pursues the policy vigorously, teaching will continue to be open to anyone and this situation holds the potentials of further eroding professionalism in teaching profession. Certainly, this has other wider socio-political and economic implications given the fact that education remains a very essential component that produces a healthy and prosperous nation. This paper seeks to discuss the plight of Education and status of teachers in Nigeria: Issues and challenges.

### **Teacher Education**

Teacher education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the need of a given society at any point in time. It includes training and or education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job). Every society requires adequate human and material resources to improve its social organization, preserve the culture, enhance economic development and reform the political structures. Education is often seen as a prerequisite for quality manpower development and creation of wealth, a sure path to success in life and service to humanity. Thus, teachers have important role to play to adequately prepare the young for their roles in the society in order to achieve the set national objectives

### **Teacher Professional Competence**

Teacher's professional and academic competencies are seen in their ability to make use of the learning opportunities available in the environment. This means their willingness to take active part to analyze changes in the environment with other members of the work community to see these changes in relation to teachers and the schools' abilities to determine which changes and outcomes that are of the greatest relevant to the socio-economic and political development of the community's need. Education is severally conceived and inculcated by people of varying backgrounds, ages, needs and aspirations for sustainable development. Teachers' influence is always felt in every aspect of the society. The

effectiveness of any educational system depends greatly on the educational attainment of teachers because no system of education can be qualitatively higher than the quality and commitment of its teachers.

The fact remains that teaching and learning depend on teachers for there can be no meaningful socio-economic and political development in any country without teachers. It is on teachers' numbers, quality and devotion that rest the effectiveness of all educational arrangements, development and growth. Even the educational planners may have the best educational policies and designs, the government may vote the largest sum of its revenue to education, but the ultimate realization of any set of aims for education depends on the teacher. It is the teacher who will ultimately be responsible for translating policy into action and principles into practice in their interactions with their students. (Ukeje, 1996) supported this fact when he stated that education unlocks the door to modernization, and added that it is the teachers who hold the key to that door. (Afe, 1992), states that the realization of the educational objectives depends on the quality and quantity of the available teaching manpower. This can be influenced by the availability of adequate training and retraining programmes for those about to teach and those already teaching respectively. Hence, the efficiency of teacher training should be the main determining factor in the success or failure of education to meet the country's needs. The training is the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school and wider community. Education is the most powerful instrument for social and economic progress. It is the greatest power yet known to man for his/her own improvements. Teachers are the heart and soul of the educational enterprises, indeed, the life of the school system depends on them.

Teachers belong to the profession which has the only potential of determining the social, economic, political and moral destiny of every Nigerian citizen. This fact underscores the necessity for teacher education to be perceived as a sacred duty that must never be toyed with if teaching must fulfil its divine professional mandate of cultivating generations of highly responsible disciplined and useful Nigerians. However, teacher education should be regarded as the bedrock for national development. (Talabi, 1985) (Bofarin, 1986) (Afe, 1995) the major problem facing the nation has been that of getting teachers of quality. For teacher quality to rise above the educational system, a strong teacher education programme is required. This paper talks about the need for teacher education, the ideal teacher education, teacher education and national development, reviews the historical development of teacher education in Nigeria, and further examines teacher education reforms as undertaken by Phelps-Stokes and Ashby commissions, Nigeria regional governments, as well as the post-independence efforts. Subsequently, the paper identifies and discusses the challenges facing teacher education in the country and give suggestions towards improving the system.

### **The Need for Teacher Education**

Teacher education is policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitude, behaviours and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school, the church/mosque and the local and wider society. Although, ideally it should be conceived of and organized as a seamless continuum, teacher education is often divided into three stages:

- Initial teacher training (teacher candidates)
- Induction (the process of providing training and support during the first few year of teaching or the first year in a particular school).

- Teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD) (an intensive process for practicing teachers).

### **Teacher Education in Contemporary Nigeria: Trend, Challenges and Prospect**

The issues of teacher preparation, supply, status enhancement, motivation and retention as well as continuous training and retraining are at the heart of education reform at all levels. The overarching goal of human capacity development for the efficient and effective delivery of the Universal Basic Education (UBE), Education for All (EFA), and related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is that by 2015 Nigeria will have human resources base to manage and implement the UBE scheme (National Action Plan [NAP] 2006: 53). Thus, through strategic actions that include the following, the objectives seemed realizable

- continued expansion of teacher training opportunities;
- continuous programme of enhanced status and professionalism for teachers through training and retraining, reviews of current remuneration packages, and enhanced career opportunities;
- Programs designed to address the capacity needs of schools and educational management;
- building the capacity of the inspectorate services to improve quality
- engaging civil society partners in the roles of quality assurance, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment work at all levels.

The need and critical role of professionalizing the teaching profession, vested in the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN), by virtue of the Teachers Registration Council Act, began in 2007 with the mandatory registration of all professionally qualified teachers. This action is equally matched with comprehensive training and in-service training seminars and workshops in the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. More importantly, the TRCN has begun implementation of the NPE provision that all teachers in education institutions including universities shall be professionally trained [NPE Section 8(b) paragraph 72, 2004]. This was in a bid to ensure adequate supply of manpower in Nigerian schools in conformity with the goals of teacher education as specified in Section 8(b) of the (NPE, 2004), paragraph 70-79, the (NAP,2006) and the 10 Year Strategic Plan, among others. While the goal of the Strategic Plan is to design a teacher education framework, based on what teachers should know and do relative to Nigeria's new vision and mission, the (National Policy on Education, 2004 in Makoju, G.A.E. et al 2005p.166);highlights the thrust of the ongoing reform noting that it aims to:

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

It is significant and noteworthy that these approaches contributed immensely towards addressing teacher education challenges through training and retraining, instructional material development and availability, periodic renewal of teacher licenses, capacity building for reformed inspectorate service, and support to the TRCN's mandate and enhancement of teachers' status and incentives. Today, teacher education is much improved than it was before

***Plight of Education and Status of Teachers in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges.***

and a few decades after independence. The NPE, released in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 clearly articulates the importance attached to teacher education and affirms that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. The policy makes it mandatory for all teachers in Nigeria to be trained and stipulates NCE as the minimum qualification for the profession. It also provides that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum, even as it underscores the need for teachers to be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. It further recognizes the need for in-service training as an integral part of continuing teacher education. Today, the statutory responsibility for teacher education in Nigeria is vested in Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, Polytechnics, National Teachers Institute (NTI) and Nigerian Universities' Faculties of Education. Nigerian Polytechnics and Colleges of Education award the NCE which is a sub-degree but professional teachers are expected to at least, have diplomas obtainable after three years of full-time study. The admission requirement for the NCE programme is Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) or its equivalent with passes in five subjects including English language, and the curriculum for NCE teachers is designed to produce teachers exposed to a range of courses covering all that is required to make them competent professionals. New courses such as Computer Education, Mathematics and general English have been made compulsory for all NCE students. Also, relevant themes such as Nigerian constitution, environment/conservation education, population and family life education, HIV/AIDS education, drug abuse and women's education have recently been integrated into the curriculum. On its part, the NTI was established in 1976 by decree No. 7 of 1976 to offer upgrading programmes for teachers through distance learning. Over the years NTI has been providing in-service training for teachers during school holidays and weekends leading to the award of NCE, B.Ed. and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) certificates. Similarly, Institutes of Education in the various universities have also been involved through distance learning and offer of part-time courses for the training of teachers who earn NCE, B.Ed., and PGDE certificates on successful completion of studies. On the other hand, faculties of education prepare pre-service teachers for B.Ed., B.A. (Ed.), M.Ed., and PhD degrees. There are four major components of the degree program in the Nigerian universities namely, General Studies Educational studies, Studies related to the students' intended field of teaching and teaching practice.

**Challenges Facing Teacher Education in Nigeria**

In spite of the various recommendations and reforms that targeted repositioning teacher education in the country for optimal performance, the challenges facing teacher education in Nigeria are still numerous. While some of these emerged with the changing socio-economic and political condition of the time, others evolved as a result of government neglect of the education sector especially as it concerns keeping pace with emerging realities, such as, servicing Nigeria's growing population, education demand and needs with matching supply of education services and facilities. Some of these challenges are specifically examined as follows;

**Poor Policy Implementation**

Poor policy implementation is a challenge to quality delivery of teachers' education. The poor quality delivery is responsible for the abysmal low performance of teachers' graduates from the institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. (Anyakoha, 1994) argued that our policies are written by knowledgeable writers who have foresight and believe strongly in what they write for the future but the problem comes when it comes to translating theory into practice by implementers. However, several factors could be adduced as inhibitors to smooth implementation of educational policies and thereby resulting to poor quality delivery. Such as government underfunding of education, injudicious utilization of available funds by

implementation agencies: vice chancellors, rectors, provosts, deans of faculties, heads of department etc. When funds meant to deliver quality education is misappropriated or embezzled, the education which learners receive becomes worthless.

### Brain-Drain

Brain-drain refers to massive movement of professionals from developing countries to developed countries to seek for better job opportunities and settle there. Brain-drain is one of the commonest problem facing all the higher institutions in the country. Many academic and non-academic staff have migrated to other countries for a better teaching work with good salaries. Odetunde (2004) observed that, there was mass exodus of many brilliant lecturers to the business world and others left Nigeria for better services. Oni (2000) also submitted that many experienced and young lecturers are fleeing from the frustration of university life into more rewarding and more challenging sectors of the economy. The result of the faculty exodus is observed in the quality of graduates that our Universities produce.

Many factors are responsible for the massive migration of our best brain to other developed countries and these factors include poor motivation, poor working condition, poor infrastructural facilities, insecurity, strike actions and underfunding of education. The implication of brain-drain to the Nigerian higher education is the shortage of academic staff we are facing now.

### Strike Actions

Strike actions by different union groups in the teacher education institutions are another problem that is facing the country. Higher institutions are home to many union groups with different interests. In demanding for their request from the government always leads to strike because the government will not always yield to their demands. These strike actions affects the programs of the institutions and that of the students. Academic activities are suspended and sometime schools may even be closed down. Ahunanya and Ubabudu (2006) who cited Ayo-Shobowale submitted that: the perception of falling standards coupled with the escalating incidence of examination malpractices, low rate of completion of university programmes at the required time due to closures and strikes all confirm and provide bases for the fear of the public regarding the outputs of higher education and has cast serious doubts on the credibility of Nigeria's degrees and certificates both within and outside the country. Okoli, Ogbondah & Ewor, (2016) observed that it has become a known fact that students across various universities in Nigeria are constantly faced with strike actions embarked upon by the Academic and Non-Academic Staff Unions of various institutions. The disagreement or lack of understanding between government and unions arising from non-implementation of agreement reached, often results in deadlock that usually disrupts academic calendar. As academic activities are suspended for a long period, the students reading abilities fell. Even the previous knowledge acquired is even forgotten by some students. This mostly turns some students into certificates seekers than knowledge seekers.

### Inadequate funding

Inadequate funding is an immediate problem facing the education system in Nigeria. This issue of inadequate funding has been in play for series of years, yet, it has not occurred to be a matter of concern to those in charge (Olaosebikan, V. B. 2021).. The education sector ordinarily ought to be one of the sectors that is most invested in. It could be that several administrations have paid inadequate attention to the funding of the education sector because it seems not to be yielding immediate visible profit.

### **Recommended Solutions to Problems Facing Education in Nigeria**

To solve these challenges, this article recommends: that the government should increase the funding of teachers educational, employment of more lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, implementation of agreement with unions, effective staff development programme, effective motivation policy and effective supervision.

**Adequate Funding** For the realization of the objectives of teacher education in the Nigeria as possible, the government should increase the funding of all teacher education institutions in the country. Government of Nigeria should place high premium on education by meeting up the recommended 26% educational spending prescribed by UNESCO, to help revitalize the higher education system. Enabling environment should be created for staff through improved conditions of service, provision of basic infrastructures, virtual libraries and information communication technologies and internet connectivity (Bamigboye, G.A. & Adeyemi, D. (2016). Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should set up internal quality assurance and monitoring of lecture units to enhance good quality delivery.

#### **Employment of More lecturers**

The government should direct school administrators to employ more lecturers in all the teacher education institutions in the country. Teachers are strong member of the educational institutions. The roles of teachers cannot be replaced. Teachers are the implementer of the school curriculum. The employment of more qualified lecturers will help to improve the quality of teacher education in the country (Ladipo, A. & Adamilekun, C. 2016).

#### **Provision of Adequate Infrastructural Facilities**

More infrastructural facilities like modern laboratories for physics, chemistry, Biology and computers etc should be provided. If quality is to be enhanced in the various teacher education institutions, then, the infrastructural base of the institutions needs to be improved upon. The government should make available enough funds for the rehabilitation of existing facilities. Government should intensify efforts in providing more physical facilities. Corporate bodies, philanthropists and alumni associations should assist in the provision of these facilities to aid effective teaching learning activities. There is need for a serious expansion of physical facilities and equipment to meet the increasing student population (Oluwatobi 2015).

#### **Implementation of Agreement with Unions**

To avert the strike actions in the Nigerian teacher education institutions, the government should implement all agreement reached and signed by government representative immediately. This will help to ensure stable academic programme in all the teacher education institutions in the country. Some of the federal Universities under study were found to have an inadequate staff to student ratio. In some departments, there were only two professors, few Ph.D. degree holders with a large number of masters' degree holders teaching courses meant for senior lecturers and professors (Arubayi, D. O. & Obanidike, J. C. (2011). This leads to non accreditation of some courses or fluctuation in the accreditation of programs because the growth and development of the academic staff does not correspond with retirement, death and resignation of academics staff particularly lecturers. So, to avoid this, the government should increase the funding of the teacher education Institutions to allow lecturers to access training funds.

### Effective Motivation Policy

To prevent brain-drain among the Nigerian academic staff in the teacher education institutions, the government should increase the salaries of lecturers, provide conducive teaching environment and improve on their welfares packages. Romina (2013) observed that to improve quality, academic staff and non-academic staff should be motivated to make them more dedicated, devoted and committed and effective in their jobs. Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria should employ more lecturers to match the students' population. Institutional policies should be revised to ensure that more emphasis is paid on teaching effectiveness of lecturers for better quality education.

### Conclusion

The paper discussed the problems facing the teacher education in Nigeria. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. The secondary data were sourced from print material and online publication by recognized institutions and individual author. There are many problems facing teachers' education in Nigeria. Some of the problems include; inadequate funding, inadequate lecturers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor supervision, brain-drain, strike actions, poor capacity development lecturers. To solve this challenges, this paper recommends that the government should increase the funding of teachers educational, employment of more lecturers, provision of adequate infrastructural facilities, implementation of agreement with unions, effective staff development program, effective motivation policy and effective supervision.

### References

- Abdul-Kareem, (2021).. The effect of two instructional methods on junior secondary school. Home Economics students academic performance in Nigeria secondary school.
- Anyakoha (2000) Journal of Educational Research Association 1(1) 14-35.
- Arubayi, D. O. &Obanidike, J. C. (2019). Problems of teaching in senior secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria Studies in Home and Consumer Science, 5(2), 113-119.
- Afe .(2000). Lang grant extension as a global endeavour: Connecting knowledge and international development. "The Review of Higher Education. 36(1): 91-124.
- Bamigboye, G.A. &Adeyemi, D. (2000). Impact of economic crisis on education. A case study of southwest Nigeria. Research Gate, Conference Paper ISBN 978-84-608-5617-7 Velecia Spain (pp2893-2896).
- Federal Government of Nigeria 2004, National Policy of Education Nigeria 4<sup>th</sup> edition NARDC Press. Yaba Lagos, Nigeria.
- Ladipo, A. &Adamilekun,C. 2020). Preparing Nigerian Youths for Entrepreneurship: Challenges and Strategies. A Keynote address at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Home economics Research Association of Nigeria. University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Odetunde (2019). "Global economics recession; its impact on the Nigerian economy.
- Ogdodo C.O. &Oraka, A.O. (2017). Challenges and prospects of entrepreneurship training and development in Nigeria Evidence from Awka South L.G.A., FROM Awka South LGA of Anambra State. Int. J. Initiative Finance and Economics Res.5(4), 73-86.



*Plight of Education and Status of Teachers in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges.*

Oluwatobi (2015). Evaluating private and public schools dichotomy. School indiscipline. Nigerian Tribune Newspaper, February 9, pp. 35.

Olaosebikan, V. B. (2021). Reflecting on entrepreneurship education in Home Economics Curriculum in a depressed economy Issues and Challenges. Journal of Education Health and Technology Research, Vol. 1(1), 117-123.

Romina (2013). Challenges of entrepreneurship in home economics and enhancement strategies. Journal of Home Economics Research 7, (2), 69-75.