

**TEACHER EDUCATION IN DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION: ISSUES AND  
CHALLENGES**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Teacher education is no doubt, a lifeline for development in all facets of human endeavour. Any society that toys with its teacher education does so at its own peril. For it is through teacher education that professionals in all fields are produced. Countries of the world that have progressed socially, economically, technologically and even politically have done so as a result of heavy investments they made in their teacher education system among others. It may not be an overstatement to say that any country that is not ready to fund adequately its teacher education system will continue to lag behind socially, economically and technologically.

This paper attempts to address the imperatives of teacher education in a democratic Nigeria and examines the challenges that stand in the way for the realisation of a functional teacher education system. Issues to be addressed include policy issues, admission of candidates, infrastructural facilities, teacher educators and trainable human materials for the teacher producing institutions. Challenges for functional teacher education through the issues raised would be addressed. However, we begin with conceptual definition of key terms in the topic.

## **2.0 Conceptual Definitions**

It is important from the beginning to examine the different concepts that make up the title of this presentation. Defining our concepts will save us from straying off the track. This is because concepts acquire different meanings when used in different situations. The concepts are: teacher, education, democracy, dispensation, issues and challenges.

A Teacher, according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (ND), is a person whose job is teaching, especially in a school. However, the concept here is used to denote a professional teacher who has been examined and found qualified to teach in accordance with the provision of National Policy on Education. Education is also defined by the above dictionary as a process of teaching, training and learning, especially in schools or colleges, to improve knowledge or skills. It can also mean particular kind of teaching or training. However, in the context of this paper it specifically refers to learning and training teachers undergo in order to become professionals in the art of teaching. Therefore, when the two are put together i.e. 'teacher' and 'education' they refer to training teachers receive for them to qualify as teachers according to set out curricular requirements.

Democracy as a noun means a system through which people of a country elect their representatives by casting votes. The adjective of democracy is 'democratic' which refers to a country, system or state controlled by representatives who are elected by the people of a country. By extension therefore, democratic here means the state of Nigeria that is run on the basis of representatives we elected at various levels of government. Dispensation according to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary means a political or religious system that operates in a country at a particular time. But the context in which it is used here refers to the political system that operates in Nigeria. When the two are put together, i.e. 'Democratic' and 'Dispensation' they mean 'during the political system that operates now in Nigeria'.

The last two concepts in the title are issues and challenges. Issue in the dictionary connotes important topic that people are discussing or arguing about, a key/sensitive/controversial issue. However, the context in which it is used in this write up refers to important issues around teacher education in Nigeria especially those that require serious attention in order to enhance teacher education. While challenge according to Advanced Learners Dictionary means a new or difficult task that tests somebody's ability and skill, in this context however, it is used to denote what government or institutions should consider doing to ameliorate shortcomings

identified in teacher education which affect production of teachers and proper teaching at the lower level of education system in Nigeria.

Therefore, the topic of this paper requires us to examine the place or position of teacher education in the present political dispensation in Nigeria and show to the authorities how to better it for the overall good of educational system in Nigeria.

### **3.0 History of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

The history of teacher education in Nigeria is linked to Christian Missionary activities in Western Nigeria in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) established the first training institute at Abeokuta in 1859 for the purpose of producing teachers for schools under the Society as well as Church clergies for evangelical needs of the Society. However, the institute was relocated to Lagos by the Society, and by 1896 it was moved to Oyo under the name of St. Andrews College, Oyo (Osokoya 2010). The second and third teacher training colleges were also founded by other missionary outfits. The Baptist Mission founded its teacher training college in Ogbomosho in 1897 while Wesleyan Methodist established, in 1905, Wesleyan College in Ibadan. However, the history of teacher training college in Northern Nigeria dated back to 1909 (Ibid). It was, unlike in the Western part of Nigeria, the British colonialists that established the first teacher training college in Nasarawa with the aim of producing teachers for numerous schools established by the colonial government in some parts of Northern Nigeria.

Training of teachers during the colonial period had undergone series of transformation from producing pupil-teacher to certified Grade III and Grade II teachers by 1925. The Ashby commission's report revolutionized teacher education in Nigeria, for in addition to bringing to the fore the inadequacy of trained teachers for secondary schools, it also recommended the establishment of more universities and the introduction of Bachelors Degree in Education in both Arts and Sciences as well as professional Degree in Education. Earlier, graduate teachers were holders of either B.A. or B.sc Degree without teaching qualification

save for few who underwent Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at the University of London (Jekayinfa ND).

However, from independence to date, Nigeria witnessed drastic change and development in teacher education institutions. A part from the pioneer teachers colleges established before and after independence, Universal Primary Education (UPE) of the mid 1980s brought in its wake the establishment of many emergency teachers colleges and expansion of existing teachers colleges for the mass training of teachers for Universal Primary Education (UPE) primary schools. Earlier in the 1950s, similar mass training was carried out in the Western region for the free primary education introduced in the region. Universal Primary Education caused unprecedented growth of secondary and tertiary institutions which also called for training of more teachers (Osokoya 2010).

The Ashby report, referred to above, recommended for the training of Grade I teachers at (advanced) teacher training colleges, to be established at Lagos and in the Western region, departments of teacher training in the technical institutions and Higher School Certificate candidates who would undergo training on teaching and practical teaching at secondary school. This recommendation was intended to assist in ameliorating dearth of trained teachers at both primary and secondary schools in the early 1960s (Argungu 2010). Unfortunately, the scheme made little impact as schools continued to emerge as a result of demand for primary and secondary school teachers. There are 94 National Certificate in Education (NCE) training institutes spread across Nigeria with a minimum of one college of education per state and Abuja.

University teacher education in Nigeria dated back to colonial period. According to Leigh (2007), high dropout rate of students at Yaba Higher College made colonial government to set up the Elliot Commission in 1943 to examine the needs of British West Africa for higher education. The outcome of the Commission's investigation led to the establishment of the first University College in 1948 at Ibadan. As affiliate to the University of London, the University College was mandated to run degree programmes. Regional universities emerged later after

Nigeria's attainment of independence. Ukeje (2004) observed that University College commenced, on inception, a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education programme of the University of London for graduates in both Arts and Sciences to qualify them for teaching jobs. However, the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, established in 1960 as an autonomous and unique institution with an American bias, with no affiliation to any university in or outside Nigeria, commenced its teacher education programme with four year degree Programmes in education for Arts (B.A. Ed) and Science (B. Sc Ed). Ukeje informed us that:

Interestingly, all the first generation universities subsequently adopted the University of Nigeria concurrent model. Some, notably Ibadan, started the designation of 'B.Ed' for the concurrent degree programme with a teaching subject. But some other universities introduced a purely professional four year degree programme in Education in fields like Guidance and Counselling, Curriculum Development, Educational Psychology, Educational Administration and also designated their degrees as B.Ed.

Thus, the second generation universities as well as state and private universities adopted the University of Nigeria, Nsukka as a model, wherever there is a faculty of education running four- year degree programmes in Arts and sciences. Only very few continued with the old model of professional education degree without a teaching subject. The responsibility of teacher training is today vested in institutions that are specifically established for that purpose. These institutions are; colleges of education, institutes of Education based in Universities, National Teachers Institute, Faculties of Education in Universities and Polytechnics that offer NCE Technical (Osokoya 2010).

#### **4.0 Teacher Education under Political Dispensation**

It is clear, from what have been said above, that necessary infrastructures for Teacher Education had been laid down in tune with demand for teachers occasioned by establishment of schools to cater for the growing number of school going children. This spectacular feat was achieved by both the Military and civilian administrations. The concern of the paper here, however, is how does teacher

education fair in the present Political dispensation. What are the issues that militate against teacher education in the present political set up and to what extent is the political administration addressing these issues. Such issues are too numerous and therefore, some select representatives would be examined in due course.

#### *4.1 Policy Issues*

It can be observed that teacher education today has undergone improvement than what it was before and after independence. The importance that is attached to teacher education today is a product of National Policy on Education (NPE) that has been revised at various times up to 2004 which, according to Osokoya (2010) is hinged on the belief that 'no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers'. The thrust of the goals of Teacher Education as enshrined in NPE are:

- Producing highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system.
- Encouraging the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers.
- Helping teachers to fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and to enhance their commitment to national goals.
- Providing teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing conditions.
- Enhancing teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Looking at the above imperatives for producing a good teacher, one will be inclined to observe that the goals set above are far from being realised as far as the reality on ground shows. Teachers being produced today lack all motivations to make them efficient, creative, committed and professional in the teaching career at all levels of education. Our institutions for the training of teachers today lack basic facilities while teacher educators operate in an environment that could better be described as hostile for grooming the kind of teachers the National Policy on Education has in mind. One needs only to visit a rural school and see for

himself how uncommitted teachers are to the teaching profession because of the kind of school environment that produced them and the environment in which they operate.

#### *4.2 Under-Funding*

A good Teacher Education is a product of good and sufficient funding for the development of infrastructures and provision of essential teaching and learning materials. Looking at various programmes at NCE level involving all subjects taught at basic education level and B. Sc Ed and B.A. Ed programmes across subjects listed for teaching at secondary school level, one will just imagine the quantum of funds needed for the teacher education programmes at colleges of education and universities. It should be noted that input always determine output. The more funds injected into teacher training institution the good and quality teacher one would expect. However underfunding is the bane of many colleges of education today, especially state owned. Consequent of that such colleges lack adequate teaching equipment, workshops, laboratories, books and journals, and classrooms and office accommodation (Argungu 2010). Such multifarious problems hamper effective teaching and learning. In most cases intervention in the form of funds from state government comes only when it is certain that some programmes are going to be closed down by an accrediting body.

The underfunding in the university system seriously affects faculties of education where teachers for Nigeria's secondary schools are produced. The UNESCO prescribed 26 percent of annual budget and the recommendation that 6 percent of the GDP should be spent on education is far from being realised. Governments in Nigeria allocate to education (including Teacher Education) far less than what was prescribed by UNESCO (Leigh 2007). As a result of this, faculties of education across Universities in Nigeria lack adequate teaching and learning facilities which affect products produced by them.

#### *4.3 Admission problem*



Admission is a very important issue that borders on Teacher Education. Though admission requirements into colleges of education are clear and candidates apply on their own volition, yet many of the candidates are not emotionally stable and ready to train as teachers. Personal qualities and characteristics of the candidates such as physical uprightness and communication proficiency are not taken into consideration during screening/interview (Osokoya 2010). Admission of candidates to read teacher education courses is mostly reserved for candidates who fall short of the requirements for admission into other lucrative courses such as Medicine, Computer Science or Accountancy in most universities. Similarly, candidates who have the lowest requirements for admission but who have godfathers are given admission into the teacher education faculties. Though there is no statistics to support this observation, but it is believed that over 50 percent of candidates admitted to read teacher education did not either intend or choose education even as their second choice. The culture of godfatherism that is so rampant outside colleges of education and universities, among politicians and their cohorts among the civil servants, is now threatening our tertiary institutions. Of course, the price these teacher education institutes are paying is to cope with examinations malpractice, spillover syndrome and mass withdrawals of students who would have performed better and graduated had they been given courses of their choice.

#### *4.4 Inadequacy of Infrastructural Facilities*

Our educational institutions from primary to university are overtaken by congestion of monumental dimension. Classrooms, lecture halls, workshops, theatres and laboratories are too inadequate for the number of students admitted in teacher education courses. Lecture theatre designed and constructed for use by 1000 students is now used for about 3000 students. Laboratory equipment is more than shared among students because only very few demonstrate with them while the majority just watch. The same sordid picture steers one in the eyes if one visits students' halls of residence. Overcrowding has taken over all our hostels where students live like refugees with over-stretched facilities. University students use double-bunks officially allocated by authorities while army of squatters outnumber

legal occupants. Amenities such as mattresses, water, electricity, catering services and laundry enjoyed by students in the late 1980s are totally absent today.

These conditions are brought about by a combination of factors principal of which are the neglect of education by governments and over admission of students by institutions without commensurate expansion of infrastructural facilities. One can therefore imagine how a student teacher can have emotional stability to study in this condition and become the teacher that will make a difference after graduation.

#### *4.5 Teacher Educator*

Teaching is a science and an art. It is a science because it has to be learnt while it is a profession that has to be perfected. It is true that education system of a nation cannot rise above its teachers. Therefore, teacher educator is very important and necessary for the growth of education of a nation. This calls for adequate training of the teacher educator so that he can as well produce worthy and professional teachers. It should be noted that only lawyers teach in faculties of law and medical doctors teach in medical schools. One cannot find a non-engineering personnel teaching in an engineering department. Therefore, this presupposes that only professional teacher should teach in colleges of education, NCE technical departments of polytechnic, institute of education and faculties of education in our universities. But as at this moment there are non-professional 'teachers' in the service of teacher producing institutes. State colleges of education are the most adversely affected because of politicization of recruitment of teachers at that level. Teachers get posted to the college without interview or the provost gets 'directive' from a political bigwig to recruit a non-professional teacher. In the universities where concurrent B.A Ed and B. Sc Ed programmes are offered, most of the teachers at a student's teaching department are not professional teachers. Therefore the student teacher, who is on training, misses a lot by being taught by people who are not professionally prepared to handle the courses they teach.

Another dimension to teacher educator problem, especially in the colleges of education and departments in the polytechnics where NCE Technical is offered, is the dearth of teachers with higher qualifications at M.Ed. and PhD levels. Until of recent teachers in the state owned teacher education institutions especially did not consider it necessary to pursue higher qualifications. The Minimum Academic Standard for Colleges of Education introduced by National Commission for Colleges of Education which stipulates a minimum professional qualification of second class lower degree has been criticised by eminent educationists. Such criticism is justified taking into consideration the kind of students universities turn out as a result of decay that has eaten deeply into them. It is also important to know that “... one cannot give what one does not have. If we want quality in teacher education..., apart from adequate facilities and high calibre trainable human materials, we must , first and foremost, provide high calibre teacher educators” (Ukeje 2004).

#### *4.6 Lack Trainable Human Materials*

One of the critical areas of concern for the teacher education today is the absence of adequate trainable human materials especially in the North West zone of Nigeria. Teaching is not just a job and the one that can be performed by anybody. It is a sacred duty of nurturing human beings to become intellectually capable, emotionally stable and socially conscious to fit into their society. Therefore, a person to be trained as a teacher must be capable and intellectually and emotionally ready for the training and the teaching job later. It is unfortunate, however, to observe that most of candidates admitted to read teacher education at tertiary and university levels are not trainable human beings for they lack both intellectual and emotional capacities. With the abrogation of TC II, which provided most of the applicants for NCE courses, Senior School Certificate (SSCE) has now become the major supplier of applicants. Unfortunately, many of the SSCE holders, with so many Credits, know next to nothing because of major decay that has destroyed both primary and secondary education. One finds it difficult to fathom how such candidates, who cannot make a good sentence, can measure up in the

course and pass out to become good teachers. This, coupled with dearth of learning materials, congestion in lecture halls, obsolete text books and journals among others, contribute to militate against efforts by teacher educating institutions to produce well trained teachers for the growth of our education sector.

#### 4.7 In-service Training for Teacher

National Teachers Institute is a major stakeholder in teacher training in Nigeria. It had upgraded untrained teachers holding secondary school certificate to obtain Grade II Teachers certificate as part of its statutory functions. Currently, it runs a Pivotal Teachers Training Programme which commenced at the inception of Universal Basic Education Programme in 1999. Both the two programmes came under attack by educationists for the low performance of their products in the class. Upgraded TC II teachers, according to critics, are deficient in both academic subjects they teach and application of teaching techniques. As for the PTP graduates concern was shown on the “low academic standard of the recipients and the poor quality of admission requirements for the programme” (Osokoya 2010). What however is missed by the critics is the fact that it is the background of the products that contributed to the low performance. At any rate, some measures of achievements have been attained as the products now constitute a significant workforce in the teaching industry.

#### 5.0 The Challenges

Having seen some of the problems teacher education is facing today, it is now feasible for us to attempt to address challenges that would hopefully chart a way forward for teacher education in the present democratic dispensation. The challenges will be examined in the areas of policy making, funding, training of teacher educator and enhancing teacher education institutions. The measures discussed below are not only seen to be panacea to the issues discussed above, but are also seen to be within the powers of the political leaders to address.

### 5.1 *Funding:*

It is a fact that government alone cannot fund education. This has been hammered on by government during its negotiations with academic staff unions of tertiary institutions. Academic staff Union of Universities' suggestion for taxing multinational companies by government to fund tertiary education has proved successful. It was this idea that gave birth to Education Tax Fund (ETF) which is now renamed as Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETF). Many institutions have benefited immensely from this Fund more than the annual budgetary allocations from governments.

In view of the present funding challenge facing teacher education sector, government is challenged to:

- make extra-budgetary allocation as special intervention funds to this sector to cover provision of instructional materials, workshop and laboratory equipment, books and journal for library in colleges of education, faculties of education, institutes and departments of NCE Technical in polytechnics;
- Tertiary Education Trust Fund should increase funding to teacher education institutions to cover infrastructural rehabilitation and development
- State governments should establish fund similar to TETF to augment funding from their annual budgets and TETF intervention for their tertiary institutions with emphasis on colleges of education. When such fund is established, it should be insulated from politics by appointing a strong trustee board to manage it.

### 5.2 *Policy Issues*

Some of the policy issues involved in teacher education are due for review as has been echoed by eminent educationists over the time. Government should, through the relevant agencies,

- Make a Masters degree as the minimum requirement for teaching at colleges of education throughout Nigeria, and make PhD a requirement for principal officer position;
- Review curriculum of teacher education from time to time to enhance the quality and relevance of institutions' academic programmes in tune with the needs of society;
- Review requirements for admission into NCE programmes to, in addition to tightening academic requirements, include moral, intellectual and physical qualities as suggested by International Labour Organisation (ILO);
- Encourage lecturers of teaching subjects in universities to acquire professional teaching qualification.

### *5.3 Teacher Educator*

Teacher educator is a key to successful teacher training. Effective and successful teaching and learning cannot take place, no matter the availability and adequacy of teaching and learning tools in form of books, journals, and laboratory and workshop equipments, without a well motivated teacher. In view of this and for a good teacher education to thrive, government should look into the following:

- Improving teacher educator's welfare in the form of enhanced salary and its regular payment;
- Providing additional incentives for persons who wish to join the teaching profession through scholarships and awards (Ibidapo 2007);
- Providing opportunities to teacher educator for training and re-training through conference and workshop attendance;
- Enhancing Information Technology (IT) capability of the teacher educator through special rigorous training.

### *5.4 Teacher Education Institutions*

The teacher producing institutions today are bedevilled by problems as shown above such as inadequate infrastructural facilities, teaching and learning tools as well as library collections and laboratory equipment. For the intuitions producing teachers to measure up to the demands for qualified teachers, government/institution should:

- Improve infrastructural facilities by rehabilitating the existing structures and providing additional ones to decongest classes and hostels of students, and offices for staff;
- Replace obsolete equipment in laboratories and workshops with new and state of the art equipment;
- Acquire current and adequate number of books, journals and periodicals to replace obsolete and outdated stock, and improve e-library access to enhance teaching and learning;
- Acquire Information Technology software, and computers and accessories to aid teaching and learning;
- Improve on supervision of student-teacher during teaching practice by making necessary funds available to the supervisors
- Improve upon admission procedure with a view to selecting the best from candidates who applied to read education and resist imposition of students on faculties of education who did not choose it as either first or second choice.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

- The paper started with introduction on the imperatives of teacher education and consequences of toying with it by any society or nation.

- It went further to define the concepts enshrined in the topic of discussion to distinguish between their dictionary and contextual meanings.
- Then the paper attempted to make a brief survey on teacher education in Nigeria from colonial time to the most recent period of our history;
- It went on to examine current issues on teacher education including policy issues, underfunding, inadequacy of infrastructural facilities, admission problems, teacher educator and lack of trainable human materials.
- Finally, challenges were identified in the area of funding, policy making, and teacher educator and teacher education institutions.



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