

Enhancing Teachers' Quality in Nigerian Colleges of Education for National Development

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Abstract

This paper considered enhancing teachers' quality in Nigerian colleges of education for national development. Since there cannot be quality basic education except there is enhancement of teachers' quality and as well as quality teacher education in Nigeria. To guarantee the effectiveness of teachers' quality in Nigerian colleges of education, a sound teacher education programme is imperative. The authors therefore considered teacher education programmes as an input – output analysis. The paper therefore explained who is a teacher in colleges of education. It provided clear understanding of whom the teacher is and his roles in national development. It also identified ways of enhancing quality teachers in Nigerian colleges of education for national development. It x-rayed, as well as, the accompanying challenges that hinder quality of the teachers and as well as the recommendations or suggestions on how to overcome the challenges to enhance the teachers' quality, quality of their products and quality of the basic education for national development. The recommendations include among others: continue professional development of teachers in colleges of education; adequate funding of teacher education in Nigeria, just to mention a few.

Key words: Enhancement; Teachers' Quality; Colleges of Education; National Development

Introduction

Teachers are the bedrock of any educational system, playing a crucial role in shaping the minds and futures of students. Colleges of education, which are dedicated to training teachers, hold a particularly significant place in national development. These institutions not only prepare individuals to become educators but also contribute to the broader socio-economic growth of a nation by fostering a well-educated populace. This introduction explores the multifaceted relationship between teachers in colleges of education and national development, emphasizing the importance of teacher training, the role of colleges of education, and the broader implications for society. Teacher training is fundamental to the effectiveness of educational systems. Well-trained teachers are better equipped to deliver quality education, adapt to diverse learning needs, and inspire students to achieve their potential. Colleges of education are specialized institutions that focus on developing the pedagogical skills, subject matter knowledge, and professional attitudes

necessary for effective teaching. The quality of education that future teachers receive at these colleges directly impacts their ability to contribute positively to the learning environment of their students.

According to National Policy on Education (2013), the goals of teacher education among others shall be to:

- produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- further encourage the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- Provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situations.

In the context of national development, the quality of teacher training is paramount. Educated individuals are essential for economic growth, innovation, and the overall progress of a country. Teachers trained in colleges of education play a crucial role in producing an educated workforce capable of driving development initiatives. They are responsible for nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills in students, which are essential competencies in the modern knowledge-based economy.

The Role of Colleges of Education

Colleges of education serve as the foundation for the teaching profession. These institutions offer a comprehensive curriculum that encompasses both theoretical and practical aspects of education. Teacher trainees are exposed to various teaching methodologies, classroom management techniques, and educational technologies that prepare them to handle the complexities of contemporary classrooms. Moreover, colleges of education often include field experiences such as student teaching, which allows future teachers to apply their learning in real-world settings. The impact of colleges of education extends beyond the individual teachers they train. By maintaining high standards of teacher education, these institutions contribute to the overall improvement of educational quality across the country. They often engage in educational research and community outreach programs that address local and national educational challenges. This engagement not only enhances the professional development of teachers but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in education.

Who are teachers in colleges of education and their roles in national development?

According to Ukeje (2004), a teacher is the pivot of the education process. While according to Akhator (2014), the word 'teacher' is one who teaches. The purpose of teaching is learning. Thus, if the students did not learn well, it shows that the teacher did not teach well. The main aim of teacher education is to produce an instructional manager, who is able to elicit appropriate changes in the behaviour of the learners, who are the central figure of the educational process, while the teacher is the pivot of the education process. According to Allen (1961) in Ukeje (2002), "Always there stands the teacher". Therefore, it is upon their number, enhancement, their education, training, re-training and updating of qualified teachers' skills, and knowledge in the current innovations in the highly dynamic teaching, their effectiveness, efficiency, dedication, empowerment and motivation to a great extent, depends on the success of the education process, educational system and national development in general.

Teaching is a systematic approach and organized process of translating act in accordance with acceptable professional principles. The person who performs these acts is a

teacher. When we are describing a teacher, we think of a teacher as a person, what he does in the classroom, his interaction with pupils/students, his relationship with other members of the staff, his background education, preparation and experience. We also talk of a teacher in terms of his honesty, cooperation, consideration, forcefulness, scholarship, magnetism, good judgments, carefulness, dependability, industrious, leadership ability, self-reliant, attractive personal appearance, neatness, refinement, good health, thrift, fluency, enthusiasm, etc. A teacher is one who has the following attributes:

- ✓ Initiating, directing, administering;
- ✓ Explaining, informing, showing how;
- ✓ Giving security;
- ✓ Unifying the group;
- ✓ Clarifying the attitudes, beliefs and problems;
- ✓ Making curriculum materials;
- ✓ Diagnosing learning problems and procedures;
- ✓ Evaluating, recording and reporting;
- ✓ Organizing, arranging and managing classrooms;
- ✓ Enriching community activities;
- ✓ Participating in professional and civil life.

Also, a teacher is the one who possesses the following competences:

- He knows what to teach and how to teach it;
- He knows the nature of human organism;
- Knows how to help learners to think critically and independently;
- Knows how to help learners to become conscious of their own values, to examine these values, and build for themselves values that are more satisfying to them and to the society;
- Knows how to work with small and large group of varying ages and abilities;
- Knows how to help learners to be eager to find out, to be curious, inventive and creative;
- Knows how to appraise a learner to make individual diagnosis and help a learner develop desirable fashions; Know how learning takes place and what motivates behaviours;

It is said that education unlocks the door to modernization and it is most often realized / appreciated that it is the teacher who holds the key to the door.

The school provides a setting within which the boys and girls can grow intellectually and this can only be achieved through the association of the learners with information, knowledge, facts, adequate teaching and learning environment, motivation and learning materials like books, laboratories, etc. but always, a teacher stands out, and always on stage, front and centre to use these materials to make a difference. What he does not have can be an irreparable loss to the learners, Nigeria society, posterity and to national development. For example, whatever government wants in Nigeria society, they include it in the school curriculum for inculcation by the teacher and for the production of good citizens for national development.

Teachers in Colleges of Education and National Development

The role of teachers in national development cannot be overstated. Educators are instrumental in transmitting knowledge, values, and skills that are critical for personal and societal progress. In developing countries, where educational systems face numerous challenges such as limited resources, high student-to-teacher ratios, and inadequate infrastructure, the importance of

well-trained teachers is even more pronounced. Teachers who are products of colleges of education are better prepared to navigate these challenges and provide quality education to their students.

Moreover, teachers contribute to national development by promoting social cohesion and civic responsibility. Education is a powerful tool for social integration, helping to bridge divides and foster a sense of community and national identity. Teachers are at the forefront of this process, guiding students from diverse backgrounds and instilling values of tolerance, respect, and cooperation. By doing so, they help create a more harmonious and stable society, which is essential for sustainable development. Teachers also play a critical role in addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability. Through education, they empower individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to improve their livelihoods, participate in democratic processes, and contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources. Colleges of education, by training teachers to be socially responsible and environmentally conscious, contribute to the broader goals of sustainable development.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the role of colleges of education in national development is significant, these institutions face several challenges. Funding constraints, outdated curricula, and insufficient access to modern educational technologies are common issues that can hinder the effectiveness of teacher training programs. Additionally, the quality of teacher education can vary widely between institutions, leading to disparities in educational outcomes.

All professionals were brought up by the teachers, these are scientists, legal professionals, teaching professionals to mention but few. The teachers, especially the basic education teachers lay the foundation of education and are veritable agents for national development. Even, these remarkable achievements were recorded by the teachers on their jobs, there are problems that constitute very serious impediments to effective goal attainment. According to Olugbemiro (2002), our concept of teaching must move with shifting global paradigm and as reflected in the teacher education curriculum for national development. We should look at knowledge management from several angles and take into consideration what knowledge is of most worthy, where the learners fit in and what new roles the teacher must assume. It is nevertheless regrettable that teachers despite their crucial roles in bringing up the leaders of tomorrow are not commensurately enhanced, their welfare and working conditions are not improved; in fact, the teachers face a lot of challenges.

The challenges arise from many sectors. The researcher shall dwell on just few of these challenges and recommend ways of tackling them:

- **Under funding:** This is the most cited challenge which has in turn adversely affected the teaching profession particularly, in terms of provision of materials. Felix (2010) affirmed that "the issue of poor funding is almost a common phenomenon in public organizations except those organizations that have direct blessings of the "Almighty Executives";
- **Inadequate Continuing Professional Development:** Despite the recognized importance of teachers, certain development in recent years have emerged to challenge their relevance and compete with them in influencing the quality of their products leading to the utmost need to train, re-train and update qualified teachers' skills, and knowledge in the current innovations in the highly dynamic teaching.

Inadequate continuing professional development, as also confirmed by the National Policy on Education (2013). "where continuing professional development exists, it is often very poor". Many teachers have been teaching for years without opportunities to improve their competences through continuing professional development. One of the major issues affecting teacher professional development is the mismatch between teaching

qualifications and teacher's skills and competencies. Post initial training professional development should primarily update knowledge and skills and not focused entirely on acquisition of certificate. This will enable the teachers to fulfill the objectives of primary education which among others are to "develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment" (National Policy on Education, 2013);

The benefits of continuous professional development are numerous and include the following:

To sustain teachers' competences and learning of new skills as required in the contemporary teaching needs; To create opportunities for teachers to maintain, improve and broaden their professional qualities and knowledge; To provide forum for exchange of ideas and experiences, this will improve professional competence and commitment of teachers; To maintain competence and relevance of the teachers in today's economic, technological, political and social environments in the nation; To encourage the teachers to have adequate current educational knowledge and skills in the drive towards national development; To keep the teachers abreast of the latest innovations in the teaching profession with continuous training and to maintain professional excellence at all times; To sharpen the skills, knowledge and ensure continued relevance of teachers to perform better in the classroom, thus, becomes more useful to the employers, learners and the communities; To provide opportunities of supplementing the initial training of teachers and expand their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the teaching profession; It serves as an on-going process of change, assist teachers to adapt, contribute and participate actively in the implementation of the challenges ahead and enhance teachers' commitment to duty; Continuing professional development sustains teachers' competences and learning of new skills as required in the contemporary teaching needs; To Create opportunities for teachers to maintain, improve and broaden their professional qualities and knowledge; To Offer intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas, materials and colleagues. If teachers are to teach for better understanding, they must be intellectually engaged in their discipline and work regularly with others in their field; To maintain competence and relevance of the teachers in today's economic, technological, political and social environments in the country; To demonstrate the teachers' social responsiveness by encouraging members of the teaching profession to have adequate current educational knowledge and skills in the drive towards maintaining professional excellence at all times; To keep teachers abreast with the latest innovations in the teaching profession and prevent the setting in of the law of diminishing returns; To maintain professional excellence at all times; To sharpen skills, knowledge and ensure continued relevance of teachers in the educational system. This enables them to perform better in the classroom. Thus, the teacher becomes more useful to the employers, learners and communities; To provide opportunities of supplementing the initial training of teachers and expand their knowledge and skills to meet the current needs in education sector; To serve as an on-going process of change, in order to assist teachers adapt, contribute and participate actively in the implementation of the challenges ahead; and to enhance teachers' commitment to the profession.

With the above, the benefits of teachers' active participation in continuing professional development are necessary for employers, as it is for the education system.

Continuing professional development is the primary condition for teachers to remain fit to discharge their duties, many years after pre-service training. Therefore, supporting continuing professional development for teachers implies empowering them to render unmatched services to both their organization, humanity and for national development. On the other hand, depriving teachers of continuing professional development opportunity amount stifling their productivity and promoting quackery in the profession.

It is therefore expected that employers of teachers will continue and in fact, intensify their roles by motivating their teachers to actively participate in continuing professional development to keep them abreast of the current knowledge, skills and orientation in the field of Education through the following ways:

- readily granting their teachers leave for continuing professional development purposes;
- paying their participation fees, transport and accommodation;
- rewarding teachers who excel in continuing professional development with prizes, special recognition, commendation, accelerated promotion, etc;
- making participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) one of the criteria for enjoying certain benefits at work.
- Irregular attendance or participation in annual conferences, seminars, workshops by the teachers. Regular participation of the teachers in annual conferences, seminars and workshops are not widely available, largely due to lack of fund and or lack of incentives for participation. Nor is there yet a well-developed system of school-based teacher development to form the core of improving teaching and learning in classrooms, which could become a major source of professional development and school improvement (Adekola, 2006);
- Delay in payment of salaries and wages of teachers, teachers are owed arrears of promotion and other allowances;
- Inadequate staffing of teachers at schools. Our schools are be-devilled by inadequate teacher supply;
- Non conducive teaching and learning school environment with poor infrastructures: Most schools have poor infrastructures. Also, Lack of welfare facilities in schools. There is dearth of water supply in most of the schools. Teachers and students have to trek some kilometres before they can get water. Health facilities for teachers and students are also lacking. Markets are also far from the school locations. All these constraints seriously hinder the teachers from settling down around the school locations;
- Insecurity is another big challenge. Teachers have been constrained to harassment leading to their insecurity example from the cultists;
- Lack of maximum cooperation from the home parents, guardians, community and society.

These challenges of the teachers in colleges of education need to be tackled for national development.

Suggested recommendations on how to overcome the challenges

The challenges discussed above and many others pose serious impediments to effective implementation portending a bleak future for national development. Therefore, concrete efforts should be undertaken to overcome the challenges to enhance teachers' quality and quality of the basic education for national development in the country. In fact, there is the lamentable need for

these challenges to be overcome to enhance the teachers, as enhanced teachers are keys to national development.

Teachers can only motivate the students if they are motivated and then, it will be possible to harness their potentials for improved programme delivery and management for national development. Teachers are instruments of educating the learners for life, therefore, should be enhanced to be able to perform their tasks. The quality of teachers in both spiritual and material terms must be updated so that it can lead to behaviour modification of the students in line with societal changes for national development.

It is axiomatic that the future of a nation depends to a large extent on the teacher, and the training the students were able to receive. Students can thus be seen as foundation on which the development of any country can be erected. Therefore, all the lamentable challenges of teachers need to be tackled for national development.

Government and stakeholders should give great priority attention to teachers' challenges, as teachers are the master key to educational development, through the following suggested ways:

- Adequate funding should be made available for teaching and learning processes: According to Owodunni (2010), the problem of funding is a perennial one especially as regards the heavy financial cost involved in training. Any effort made to produce quality teachers may be hindered by insufficient fund. Maduwesi & Onyeachu in Ayodele (2012) observed that inadequate funding is the greatest problem militating against qualitative education in Nigeria and this has regularly surfaced as factor of contention whenever there is a crisis between the various unions in the education sector and the government example, between the university teachers and the federal government, between the secondary school teachers and the their respective state governments, and between the Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) and the government. They went further to state that funding is at the root of the following teachers' problems, namely:
 - insufficient provision of facilities for teaching;
 - inadequate welfare for teachers;
 - inability of some teachers to update their knowledge and skills;
 - Insufficient provision for teachers' self-improvement schemes like conferences, workshops, seminars, in service training, etc.
- Regular recurrent continuing professional development (CPD): Continuing professional development which is for professional excellence in current educational issues and for commitment, efficiency among others so numerous to mention should be mandatory for all teachers. There is therefore the need for employers of teachers to continue and in fact, intensify their roles by motivating their teachers to actively participate in continuing professional development as professionally required to keep them abreast of the current innovations in the field of education through the following suggested way
- as pointed out in the Federal Ministry of Education Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers (2012), thus:
 - readily granting their teachers leave for continuing professional development;
 - paying their teachers participation fees, feeding, transportation and accommodation;
 - rewarding teachers who excel in continuing professional development with prizes, special recognition, commendation, accelerated promotion, etc;
 - making participation in continuing professional development a criteria for enjoying certain benefits at work;

- making participation in Continuing professional development a mandatory condition for promotion;

Apart from the regular continuing professional development of teachers, the teachers should be motivated to attend annual conferences, seminars and workshops. There is the need to bring serving teachers together for annual conferences, seminars, workshops. This will enhance their performance on the job. According to Anikweze (1995), scientific and technological research is increasing the knowledge and ability to understand complex systems and processes in an ever-wider range of scales in education and technology. Thus, we find the knowledge, teaching methodologies and lesson delivery techniques constantly changing and become richer and more challenging for teachers to implement. It is imperative that any teacher that would keep his head afloat in the midst of such challenges from students, must keep abreast of new innovations in learning styles and teaching methodologies;

- Salaries and wages of teachers should be paid as and when due and should be upgraded to reflect the economic situation of the Nigerian nation, their promotion and other allowances should also be paid as and when due;
- There should be employment of adequate number of teachers to meet up with the student teacher ratio;
- The school serves as effective agent of teaching and learning; therefore the school environment should reflect a conducive environment which has impact on the teaching and learning processes. Nwokeocha (2012), also pointed out that the school apart from being an agent of socialization also has a climate that depicts the tone of social relationships which has impact on learning. The teaching and learning environment should be made child-friendly. More permanent structures should be built with adequate furniture provided. This will help the teachers to work effectively in the heavy constrained environment in which they teach.

Welfare as well as the provision of infrastructural materials should be paramount for national development. Welfare facilities like incentives to the teachers should be given priority attention and there should be provision of water, health and market facilities at the different school locations;

Perpetrators of crime against the teachers should be brought to book- arrested, prosecuted so that teachers can stay safely in any of the places they were posted in pursuit of their legitimate means of livelihood; Parents, guardians and in fact, the entire society should give teachers maximum cooperation in the discharge of their duties.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation and improvement. Governments and educational stakeholders can invest in the modernization of colleges of education, ensuring that they have the resources needed to provide high-quality training. Collaboration between colleges of education and other educational institutions, both nationally and internationally, can facilitate the exchange of best practices and promote the continuous improvement of teacher education programs.

Furthermore, the integration of technology in teacher training offers significant potential for enhancing the quality and accessibility of education. Online learning platforms, digital resources, and virtual classrooms can complement traditional teaching methods and provide teacher trainees with diverse learning experiences. These technological advancements can help overcome some of the logistical and financial barriers to quality education, making it more inclusive and effective.

The Broader Implications for Society

The influence of teachers trained in colleges of education extends far beyond the classroom. These educators are key agents of change, shaping the future of their students and, by extension, the future of their communities and country. As teachers impart critical knowledge and skills, they also

contribute to the development of a knowledgeable, skilled, and socially responsible citizenry. This educated populace is better equipped to participate in the economy, engage in civic activities, and contribute to the overall well-being and progress of society.

Moreover, the professional development of teachers has a multiplier effect on national development. As teachers continue to grow and improve in their careers, they bring new ideas, practices, and innovations into the educational system. This continuous improvement helps to elevate the standards of education, producing better-prepared students who can meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion

Teachers in colleges of education are pivotal to national development, serving as the foundation for an educated and skilled populace essential for socio-economic progress. These educators are meticulously trained in pedagogical methods, subject matter expertise, and the practical aspects of teaching, enabling them to effectively nurture the next generation of learners. The quality of teacher training directly influences the quality of education that students receive, which in turn affects their ability to contribute meaningfully to society.

Colleges of education play a critical role in this process by providing a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum that prepares teachers to address diverse learning needs and adapt to the evolving educational landscape. These institutions not only focus on academic instruction but also instill professional attitudes and values essential for fostering a conducive learning environment. By emphasizing continuous professional development and engagement with educational research, colleges of education help maintain high standards of teaching and drive innovation in educational practices.

The broader implications of well-trained teachers extend beyond the classroom. Educators are instrumental in promoting social cohesion, civic responsibility, and sustainable development. They help bridge social divides, foster a sense of national identity, and empower individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary for personal and societal advancement. Teachers also play a vital role in addressing global challenges such as poverty, inequality, and environmental sustainability, contributing to the achievement of broader developmental goals.

However, the potential of colleges of education to drive national development is not without challenges. Funding constraints, outdated curricula, and limited access to modern educational technologies can hinder the effectiveness of teacher training programs. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from governments and educational stakeholders to invest in the modernization of teacher education, promote collaboration, and integrate technology into training programs.

In conclusion, the role of teachers in colleges of education is crucial for national development. By providing high-quality training and fostering a culture of continuous improvement, these institutions ensure that teachers are well-equipped to meet the demands of contemporary education and contribute significantly to societal progress. The influence of well-trained teachers on student outcomes, social cohesion, and sustainable development underscores the importance of supporting and enhancing teacher education programs as a strategic priority for national development.

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