

The Challenges of Teacher Education in a Globalized Economy: The Nigeria Experience

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Abstract

For a nation that aspires for greatness, considerable attention needs to be given to teacher education given the crucial role of teachers in all spheres of learning. Against this premise, the paper identifies the broad challenges besetting the teacher education industry, the colleges of education, in Nigeria: especially funding, which impacts on infrastructure; curriculum matters; constitutional and policy matters; as well as administrative and managerial imprudence. The paper recommends some redress strategies which, inter alia, include: the need for huge investment in teacher education through the increase in government funding; establishment of endowment funds for teachers; harmonization of conditions of service for teachers across all levels of the teaching profession; and complete overhaul of the regulatory agencies – especially a merger of both NCCE and NTI – to make them a more robust body and in tune with the reality of teacher education.

Keywords: *Teacher Education Challenges, Redress Strategies, Complete Overhaul*

1. Introduction

Teaching has been rated one of the nature's most outstanding noble professions in several ramifications of the word. It is noteworthy to define our conception of the teacher, in the context of this paper, as a person who had undergone professional training in the act of teaching and recognized as such for the discharge of the functions in classroom setting. This, invariably, precludes people who embark on the work by circumstance or sheer responsibility in society. This is not to suggest that other professions do not possess measures for which they could be adjudged so but it is rather traceable to the simple fact of its critical role in human resource development, as a fulcrum of knowledge. In other words, it is incontrovertible that other professions are products of the teaching profession. This realization, it could be contended, is largely responsible for the nobility of those who indulge in the profession, and, to a greater extent, the often held axiom that "Teachers reward is in heaven". This is because their roles transcend their perception as repositories of knowledge to the character transformation of the learners they teach. The recognition of the teachers' feat and place in society no doubt, has been responsible for the

declaration of 5th October as annual World Teachers' Day, held since 1994.

However, in a rapidly transforming globalized world economy, it could be observed that many a country has not come to terms with the crucially strategic role that teachers play in the society. This is quite evident in such states handling of teacher education: Considered as process and product, teacher education encompasses not only the profession and all issues relating thereto, it also presupposes all what has to do with making the learning process meaningful. It is a combination of these elements that could meaningfully impact on a society for the realization of not only the goals for which its education is set but its national objectives.

A careful examination of the National Policy on Education (2004) vis-à-vis Teacher Education Policy in Nigeria does set a presumptuously broad outline in the context of the foregoing. For instance, the National Policy on Education emphasizes the need "To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system; and "To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives" (), among others. As noted by Wokocha, 2013, Akindele, 2003, observes that laudable as the policy statements seem, substantial results has yet to be achieved, even decades after the institution and gradual transformation of teacher education institutions especially the establishment of the National Commission for Colleges of Education in 1989 and the transformation from Teacher Training Colleges to Colleges of Education in Nigeria, given the myriad of challenges. This is where the paper takes its bearing.

2. A Historical Perspective on Teacher Education in Nigeria

Teacher education was formally rooted in the country in 1896 with the establishment of the first Teacher Training College, St. Andrew's Teacher Training College, Oyo, Oyo state, to award Teachers' Grade III Certificate. This institution was later followed with up-graded versions of Teacher Training Colleges which awarded Teachers' Grade II Certificates. Today, these have gone into extinction paving way for the College of Education system through policy reviews in line with the rapidly changing societal educational needs (Yabani Committee Report, 1999).

Conceived and established as a regular teacher education entity, the COEs metamorphosed from the defunct Advance Teachers Colleges (ATC) established in 1961 as the direct result of government's acceptance of the recommendations of the Ashby Commission of 1959 (Yabani Committee Report, 1999, p. 11). The ATC was a step further in higher education for teachers following the dearth of professionals to handle the job at a higher level.

Not oblivious of the limitation of its philosophy, i.e. as essentially to provide the middle-level manpower needs in the aspect of the academic requirements of the basic education level, there has been demonstrable competence in not only teaching and learning but research in the Colleges of Education. This is because the COE system, even the defunct ATC system, had, *ab initio*, been affiliated to universities for the purpose of maturation and quality control in the award of NCE. Within a spate of less than ten years, the forebears of the system; Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo, Ondo state, Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri, Imo state, Federal College of Education, Kano, Kano state and Federal College of Education, Zaria, Kaduna state, began running degree programmes in affiliation to the universities till date. Currently, most, indeed 65%, of the Colleges of Education across the country offer degree programmes in affiliation with chosen universities.

It is instructive to note that the degree by affiliation has been made possible largely because of the superfluous nature of the qualified and experienced manpower, especially the number of academic staff of COEs who possess PhDs. This is in addition to the teaming Master degree holders, most of whom are either on course for their doctoral or on the verge of doing so. For the records, it is expedient to state that the affiliation solely involves the utilization of manpower as well as the facilities of the COEs, with the minimal supervision and award of degrees as the only commitment of the affiliate Universities. The realization of this dates as far as 1999 when the

Yabani Committee was constituted to, inter alia, re-examine the status of the Colleges of Education (Report of the Committee on the Modalities for Mounting Degree Programmes in Selected Polytechnics and Colleges of Education and Raising the Salary Scale of Principal Officers and Chief Lecturers to HATISS 15, 1999, p.3). It could be averred that the status of the COEs, in terms of capacity to award degrees in teacher education, was the added impetus which informed the recommendation of the defunct Presidential Technical Committee on Consolidation of Federal Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria that some Colleges of Education from across the geo-political zones of the country should be granted autonomy to award degrees in selected programmes (Report of the defunct Presidential Technical Committee on Consolidation of Tertiary Institutions, 2007, pp. 79 and 80).

3. The Challenges of Teacher Education, in Broad Perspective

3.1 Constitutional and Policy Issues

Principle of Federalism, State vs. Federal, has created some obstacle to the realization of the educational goals, as enunciated in the National Policy on Education. Ideally, federalism as a principle should have been a spring-board for the giant leap to progress since each federating unit strives to attain greatness. In the Nigerian context, the reverse is the case; states governments more often than not look unto the Federal Government (FG) for direction in virtually all matters. However, no sooner a benchmark is established by the same FG than they renege on its implementation, and teacher education is no exception.

Also, on careful examination, the attention that teacher education institutions, especially colleges of education, get in terms of funding and welfare of teachers does not compare with that of the universities, and indeed schools/colleges of technology. This is evident in the implementation of discriminatory welfare packages, as exemplified in the salary structure, between the universities and colleges of education on the one hand, and the manner of the provision of infrastructural facilities for technology-based institutions and teacher-education-based ones on the other. Such discriminatory policies impose on the teacher education system dire consequences visible in student enrolment and brain-drain.

Related to this is government's constant interference in matters of administration and management. Although it could be admitted that this is not peculiar to the teacher education institutions, it is obvious that the universities enjoy a measure of autonomy different from what obtains in other institutions of higher learning. Government's meddlesomeness in such areas as the choice of membership of Governing Councils, most of whom are political associates who might not have possessed requisite qualification for and experience in education institutions management, portends some grave consequences, which affects issues of quality administration.

Furthermore, the establishment of undue bureaucracies, NCCE and NTI, sought to constantly create some questionable circumstances. Notwithstanding the philosophy for the establishment of the two agencies, the fact that they both are saddled with the responsibilities of teachers of teachers need raise the issue of unity. One may contend that since the one is responsible for regulating the regular teacher education programmes – the COEs – among other responsibilities which overlaps with the other that is in charge of the Distance Learning Programme, it would be expedient to seek ways of their unified approach to the vexed issue of teacher-education. This is against the backdrop of some views that teachers share a great deal in the abysmal performance of students in examination and, indeed, the drop in students' performance in examinations.

The policy of restriction to NCE and as a middle-level manpower provider is also a challenge of teacher education in Nigeria. Among its numerous pitfalls/demerits is the constriction in enrolment of students. Currently, there are programmes in the Colleges of Education i.e. integrated science, which are being offered in very few universities, and others which are not being offered at all in the universities.

Funding: Although both federal and state governments are still responsible for the general funding of public education institutions, a critical assessment of their commitment to education reveals a tragically pathetic situation. Comparatively, States have consistently maintain a little over 11% as against the Federal government's average of 8.7% of annual budgetary allocation to education (Bamiro and Adedeji, 2010; Oyewole and Njoku, 2013). The abysmal allocation has been made largely possible through an annual "envelope" system of funds allocation by the federal government. By this is meant the setting of limit to funds which a particular government agency gets for her services in the fiscal year. This practice essentially "caters largely for the personnel cost leaving the other needs for running the system grossly under-provided for" (Oyewole and Njoku, 2013:16)

The situation can again be appreciated considering the observation of Bamiro and Adedeji (2010) that

the Federal government budgeted N210 billion for the education sector in 2008 and N249 billion in 2009. Thus, the total budgetary allocation to the education sector in 2008 and 2009 was N459 billion. Whereas, the estimated total expenditure on the Nigerian students in the US and UK universities, during the two sessions, amounted to 30% of the federal budget for education during the period. (p. 22)

Also, very recently, Umukoro, 2013, reported that UNESCO ranked Nigeria last, as the 136th, among the countries which spends the least on education as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the report,

The survey found out that the country's proportion of public spending on education as a percentage of the GDP was 0.89 percent, while Nigeria's education expenditure as a proportion of the Gross National Income was also poor, 0.85 percent, or 167th out of 168 countries

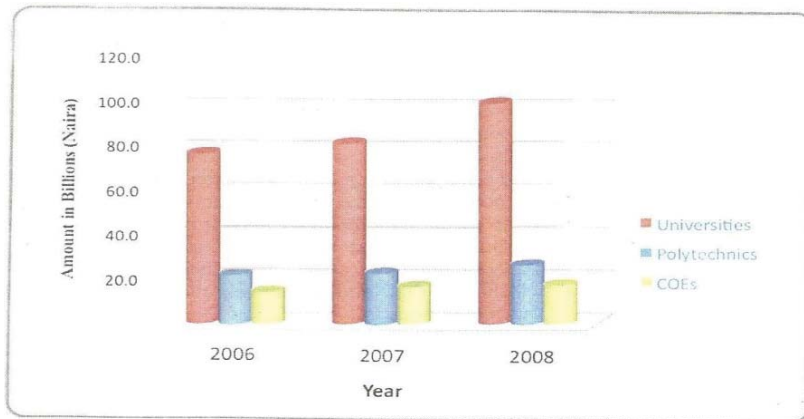
Although general funding on education in relation to the GDP is very low in the country and incomparable with the requisite amount and those of developing nations, the teacher education sub-sector gets the least fund, as can be seen in the Table below, which highlights allocations for the institutions between 2006 and 2008, and this drastically compounds the challenges of the COEs especially in the areas of provision of infrastructure and essential services.

Federal Government Allocation (N) to Federal Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (2006 – 2008)

Institution	Year	Personnel Cost	Goods & other services	Capital Projects	Total Allocation
Universities	2006	69,952,108,028	3,175,567,183	6412015000	79539690211
	2007	70,600,358,870	5,584,703,445	8285015000	84470077315
	2008	86,078,825,055	3,551,429,669	13958579185	103588833909
Polytechnics	2006	18,990,972,823	1,715,916,763	2164746264	22871635850
	2007	19,443,972,823	1,895,916,763	2424746264	23764635850
	2008	22,024,993,058	2,149,712,599	3578057860	27752763517
Colleges of Education	2006	10,911,206,151	1,067,435,864	3063175000	15041817015
	2007	11,401,898,534	1,207,989,217	4991020000	17600907751
	2008	14,088,802,102	1,279,807,659	2883329309	18251939070
Total	2006	99,854,287,002	5,958,919,810	11639936264	117453143076
	2007	101,446,230,227	8,688,609,425	15700781264	125835620916
	2008	122,192,620,215	6,980,949,927	20419966354	149593536496

Source: Sufihen, 2010, page 47

The summary of the above table has been graphically presented in Bamiro and Adedeji (2010:48) thus:



The discriminatory attention to teacher education is not limited to the regular annual allocations, through the budgetary provisions by governments. Comparatively, other tertiary institutions, e.g. universities and technical and technology education institutions get more funds from the non-regular funds providers than the COEs. For instance, the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) disburses her allocation in ratio 2:1:1 in for Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education respectively. Also, emphasis on scholarship specially and specifically target technology and science-based programmes of the other two institutions without cognizance to the needs of technical teacher education in the COE system.

3.2 Insufficient Human Resources

The dearth of qualified teachers is not limited to Nigeria. In fact, UNESCO figures from the study by its Institute of Statistics, projects that the world's teacher needs by 2015 would be nothing less than 5.24 million. The study, which shows that "the global shortage of teachers at the primary and lower secondary levels of education will persist to 2030 and beyond" puts Africa and Arab States as the worst hit by teacher shortages. In the case of Nigeria, the annual teacher gap, estimated by the same body, is such that only 1.2% of its population can adequately fill up.

The implication of shortage of teachers for the basic education level presupposes that there is attrition in the number of subscribers to the train-the-teacher programmes a service exclusively being rendered by the COEs in Nigeria. Relative to the discussion is the dearth of qualified personnel – professional teachers in the COE system – is not in doubt. A serious contributory factor is brain-drain – drift from the system to more lucrative jobs outside Nigeria and within, especially to the universities (provide data). Brain-drain, which is also said to be a global phenomenon, as the UNESCO estimates that 2.6 million teachers are leaving the profession annually in Sub-Saharan Africa, has taken a huge toll on education. The seasoned professionals, mostly of the doctorate class, from the COEs to the universities. Records from the Federal Colleges of Education sampled indicate that within a decade – between 2003 and 2013 – an average of 35% academic staff holding PhDs left the system for the universities.

Also worthy of mentioned is the issue of skilled manpower needs, in terms of qualification and competence, at both basic and COE levels, for effective implementation of the emerging curriculum in the area of technical education. This is a *sin qua non* to effective service delivery in the programme implementation process, the realization of which, we contend, the organization of mere workshops would not suffice.

3.3 *Infrastructure Deficit*

The TETFund has been making meaningful interventions in the infrastructural development of education service providers at the tertiary education level, the dearth of critical infrastructure and the need for the rehabilitation of dilapidating ones still linger: Whereas the implication of the absence of this on teacher education cannot be overemphasized. The challenge further invariably inhibits learners' requisite interest in and attraction to the learning environment.

3.4 *Issues of Disposition cum Quality of Entrants*

It has been observed that before the introduction of the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME), subscription to teacher education institutions especially the colleges of education were usually by candidates who do not readily get admission into the universities. This set of students eventually utilizes the opportunity provided to re-launch their bid and later move to the universities, on admission. Thus the colleges are left with no choice but to admit students with lower entry qualification. Attrition in subscription to COE programme by prospective students, it could be contended, stems from the general apathy to subscribe to teacher-education. The situation could also be predicated on the constriction of employment opportunities for its graduates, as most of them are confined to the teaching profession to which there is a general distaste.

Given the critical role of a teacher, the need to attract the best brains was considered an imperative hence the emphasis on the same entry qualification with that of the universities was adopted (Ukeje, 1996, in Wokocha, 2013). However, the effectiveness of UTME in providing the best for the COE system remains to be seen as preference for the universities remains the priority among candidates, which the UTME guarantees.

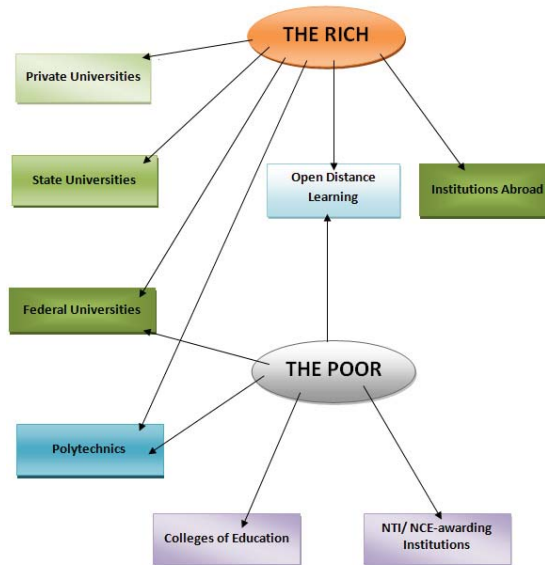
3.5 *Problem of Access*

Clearly visible in the inability of tertiary institutions to admit all candidates seeking admission annually, the problem of access to higher education, which has given rise to more Nigerian students seeking admission overseas with the attendant financial implication, Bamiro and Adedeji, 2010 notes, "relates to the levels of admissions into the HEIs vis-à-vis those seeking admissions, coupled with the identified initiatives to solve them" (p. 21). There is also a huge gap in the opportunity for access to quality education between the rich and poor in Nigeria. Carefully examined, while the affluent have access to almost all opportunities, the poor is confined to quite a few, predominantly teacher education institutions especially the colleges of education.

Our discussion of access, in this context, is not suggestive of the unavailability of quality teacher education, but in effect in relation to the problem of degree teacher education, which is not readily available to prospective teachers given the very limited space in the faculties of education of universities.

Although one is not oblivious of the consideration of the Federal Government in the location of the recently established Federal Universities in every state of the Federation, one would have expected that the distribution of the Colleges of Education should have informed their transformation into independent degree awarding institutions for ease of access by the rural communities and the hinterland. Indeed, a degree-awarding College of Education system would provide ready degree-level teacher-education opportunity to all thereby meeting the teacher-needs of the country. The Table below clearly illustrates this seemingly endemic challenge:

Illustration 1: Access to Higher/Tertiary Education between the Rich & the Poor



Source: Adapted and modified from SUFIHEN, 2010, p.22

3.6 Curriculum Issues

The concern in this context is the need for all stakeholders input in evolving an appropriate acceptable curriculum that could be adjudged adequate for addressing emergent societal challenges. As enunciated under the Philosophy of Education in the National Policy on Education (2004), “there is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive, united Nigeria; to this end, school programmes need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive...” (p. 2). Whether this has been largely achieved, however, remains, in our view, quite doubtful.

There is also the concern with respect to the involvement of stakeholders in curriculum review. This is to stem the entrenchment of controversial provisions such as enunciated under Curriculum and Instruction in the Principle 4 of the yet-to-be-ratified National Teacher Education Policy document, “The NCE curriculum shall consist of courses and programmes that are age and level-specific that is, Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary Education (PE), Junior Secondary Education (JSE) and Senior Secondary Education (SSE)” (P. 9). It could be contended that, although reforms are usually desirable, the trend, evolving a reform process in a teacher education system devoid of input from the critical players – teachers – who are key implementers of the programmes, does not augur well for educational advancement. Although the efficacy of the review may not have been in doubt however, it should be noted that such issues of relevance and adequacy in addressing the myriad of societal challenges, which the goals of education are set to achieve, would ever remain a subject of discourse.

4. Recommended Strategies for Redress

4.1 Increased Allocation to Education

Government, at all levels should consider, as imperative, the increase in the allocation to education with a view to meeting the UNESCO recommendation of 26% of the annual budget, as a minimum

benchmark. It suffices to state that the often held notion in government that her intervention agencies' funding along with the provisions in annual budgets exceeds the UNESCO specification is not, in the least, plausible.

4.2 Establishment of Endowments/Scholarship Schemes

The critical role of teacher education vis-à-vis the neglect of government should compel many a well-meaning philanthropist to invest in the profession by establishing an endowment fund for the training and retraining of teachers. Indeed, the focus on technology and engineering fields of learning evident in the established government agencies such as PTFD though may be commendable, the need for such for sustainable teacher education cannot be over-emphasized.

4.3 Harmonization of the Conditions of Service of the Academia

The non-harmonization of conditions of service of the academia is largely responsible for the brain-drain being experienced in the colleges of education in particular. Over the years, since the beginning of the millennium especially, a large number of highly trained academic staff most of whom had acquired their doctoral certificates (35%, as stated earlier), left the college of education system for the universities. A ready solution that would stem the tide of migration of such seasoned academics to the universities, one could contend, is the adoption of this strategy. This stems from the fact that the benefits accruable from the award of degrees, such as the attainment of the peak in career progression, especially the much sought professorial chair and, of course, other attractive fringe benefits and welfare matters, would eventually become realizable. While it could stem, considerably, the seemingly endemic brain-drain noticeable at all levels but predominantly from colleges of education to the universities, it would boost morale and re-invigorate all towards effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

4.4 Intervention by the Legislature

4.4.1 Statute Review

A review of the laws establishing the teacher education institutions, especially the COEs to accommodate an independent degree awarding status has become imperative. Such a review would create a dual-mandate for the colleges of education when accomplished. This would assist very much in creating ease of access and space for degrees in education related fields. Also, with a total population of a little above 400,000 students in the over eighty (80) Colleges of Education nation-wide, a dual mandate for degree-awarding would afford the holders of NCE in fields of learning not available in the universities the opportunity of acquisition of degree in such areas of specialization. Besides, the status would translate into a reduction in the teeming population of candidates who could not secure admission into the very limited spaces in the faculties of education of the universities. This is because the Colleges would readily absorb quite a substantial number of such candidates, barring all requisite qualifications, for the pursuit of degrees in appropriate fields of interest. It is critical to note that the only function of the universities to which the colleges of education are being affiliated is in the area of supervision and certification. This is because, in terms of the facilities and requisite manpower, they utilize what exists in the colleges, a ready confirmation that the colleges do possess all that is required.

The proposed dual mode is neither strange nor impracticable; indeed, the trend in global tertiary education services is the diversification in mandate or basic obligation. For instance, in Great Britain and the US, institutions with the nomenclature 'College' enjoy and indeed exercise some autonomy to award degrees in several fields of learning. The practice is also quite evident even in the case of Nigeria; it is an obvious truth that 75% of Nigeria universities have been

awarding certificates, especially diplomas, in spite of the effort of the NUC to redirect their focus on the core mandate of awarding degrees in fields of learning. As a matter of fact, available data shows that the population of students pursuing the sub-degrees of the universities constitutes 5.4% of the entire student population, for the regular programmes. In similar vein, seven (7) polytechnics in the country also award NCE (Bamiro and Adedeji, 2010, p. 36), which is not within its core mandate.

Critically examined, the policy also has inherently enormous benefits for not only the candidates but the entire nation. Such can be seen in the area of achievement of the EFA goals, which realization Nigeria still finds a mirage, and the expansion of qualitative degree opportunities beyond those that are less inclined to go to the college of education system.

4.4.2 Dedication of Constituency Projects to Education Institutions

The legislature, at all levels, should be encouraged to, as a matter of priority national interest, dedicate their constituency projects to the requisite infrastructure for the development of the education sector and site them in education institutions. This is quite practicable given the fact that all states of the federation are hosts to one education institution or another. This would assist, in no small measure, in enhancing the teaching-learning processes in the education institutions.

4.5 Administrative Initiatives

Managers of education institutions generally should evolve mechanisms with which they could conveniently source funds sufficient enough to meet their operational costs. This should necessarily include the search for collaborations and grants outside the shores of Nigeria. The realization of this would readily instill not only a full academic freedom it would also drastically reduce government's interference as a complete autonomy would be attained thereby.

5. Conclusion

The challenges discussed in this paper are not peculiar to the COE system. In fact, they could, to a greater extent be said to be a reflection of what obtains in the entire higher education institutions, hence the endemic crises between government and labour, as represented by the academic staff unions of tertiary institutions. Therefore, the foregoing recommendations notwithstanding, it is expedient to state that this team of researchers is quite convinced that there has not been any investigative panel on higher education vis-à-vis its role in the society as comprehensive as the Grey Longe Commission of 1992 on Higher Education. Through that a giant leap was taken towards not only revamping higher education but also the development of Nigeria. In other words, it would not be preposterous to call for a comprehensive panel similar to the Grey Longe Commission with a view to replicating the holistic approach to reviewing higher education for possible complete overhaul of not only teacher education but the entire facets of education, given the seemingly intractable myriad of challenges of the education sector, for a better Nigeria in a rapidly globalizing world economy.

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