

**A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND ITS
IMPLICATION FOR NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

Dr. OKERE, JOSEPH EJIMOGU

Department of Educational Foundations and Management
Faculty of Education
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri
Email: joeokere62@gmail.com Phone: 08034915225

DR. ANYANWU, CLEMENTINA A.

Department of Curriculum Studies & Educational Technology
Faculty of Education,
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

DR. MANG, OBASI ONWUKA

Department of Curriculum Studies & Educational Technology
Faculty of Education
Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri

Abstract

The paper investigated teacher education in Nigeria and its implications for the nation's education system. For the purpose of effective study, the paper used the philosophical method of analysis and clarification, to explicate the concepts of teacher education, characteristics of teaching as a profession, objectives, and trends in teacher education. The paper observed that teacher education if properly handled can yield the much needed change and reform in the nation's socio-political and economic landscape by injecting the right caliber of highly motivated and efficient teaching personnel that can positively impact the social life of their respective communities and the nation at large. The paper is of the opinion that the achievement of this cadre of personnel lies in the education, training and professional competences coupled with the right ethical background to navigate the challenges of Nigerian education system. From the exposition, it was discovered that teacher education in Nigeria has undergone several trends and changes in administration and organization, content and processes, and in competency-based teacher education with distinct aims and objectives from the colonial, post-independence, and the contemporary period. The paper is of the opinion that achieving this task would necessitate contending with the challenges of recruiting and selecting the right caliber of teachers, funding education and training teachers professionally. Given this scenario, the paper concludes that teacher education should be prioritized in the nation's development process to inject the knowledge, ingenuity and professional competence of teachers on

<https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

whose shoulders national development rests. It was recommended among other things, that teacher training should be taken seriously; and the necessary incentives and infrastructure should be provided to make teaching and learning more attractive and effective.

Keywords: Teacher, Professional Training, Pedagogical Skills, Trends and Implications.

Introduction

Nigeria has a philosophy of education that aims at making the individual a sound and effective citizen and his integration into the community. This philosophy recognizes the role of education as a powerful instrument for inculcating national consciousness and national unity, the right type of values and attitudes for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society, and the acquisition of appropriate skills both mental, physical, and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society, (Nwosu, 2017). This philosophy underpins the role of education in the development of learner's intellectual ability, acquisition of vocational skills, democratic ideals and citizenship, and the development of self-reliance and ability to cope adequately in a world of pressing problems.

Given this philosophical stance, teachers are vital for actualizing the goals and objectives of any educational system. Their training, qualification, and ethical standards are necessary for them to navigate the dynamics and the changing roles as professionals concerned with human and societal development. Teachers are responsible for translating educational policies and principles into actions and practices in their interaction with their students. This view is corroborated by Ukeje in Okere (2022) who opined that education unlocks the door to modernization and asserted that teachers hold the key to that door. Nwosu (2017) believes that realization of the educational objectives depends on the quality of the available teaching personnel. This can be influenced by the availability of adequate training and retraining programmes for in-coming and in-service teachers. This

buttresses the fact that the efficiency of teacher training should be the determining factor in the success or failure of education to meet the nation's objectives. The policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills required to discharge their duties effectively in the classroom, schools, and the wider socio-political environment should be a matter of great concern to the society.

As a profession that is obligated to cultivate a responsible, disciplined, and useful citizenry for individual and societal contribution, the teacher's impact is vital to the socio-economic, political and cultural emancipation of the Nigerian society. However, teacher education in Nigeria is saddled with problems; which can be posed in the following questions:

1. How can young people of adequate promise be attracted to the teaching profession?
2. How should selection be made among the applicants?
3. What particular form of education should be provided for teachers?
4. How should the institutions for the preparation of teachers be organized, controlled, and financed?

This paper therefore, attempts to philosophically explore teacher education in Nigeria and how it impacts the Nigerian education system. The exploration is done in the following areas; concept of teacher education, characteristics of the teaching profession, objectives, trends in teacher education, implications for Nigerian education, challenges, conclusion and recommendations.

Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education refers to the structure, institutions and processes by means of which men and women are prepared for work in elementary and secondary schools. This includes pre-schools, kindergarten, elementary and secondary institutions for children

from the age of two or three to eighteen (Agarwal, 2020). As a profession, teacher education is characterized by the following:

1. Long period of specialized preparation;
2. Activities that are predominantly intellectual, and its members possess specialized knowledge and skills;
3. Relatively high standards for admissions;
4. Regarded as a life career;
5. Represented by an effective organization or organizations;
6. A broad range of autonomy and in a larger measure sets its own standards;
7. Dedication to extension of knowledge in the area of its concern;
8. High priority to service as opposed to personal gain;
9. Emphasize self-improvement and growth in service;
10. Safeguards the welfare of its members;
11. Requires a license or certificate to practice; and
12. Bases its practice on clearly defined ethical principles. (Nwosu, 2017).

The achievement of these objectives depends on the qualification, training and experience of teachers who are trainers of teacher trainees. It also, depends on the teacher's code of professional conduct which guide and regulate their activities. This philosophy underpins the role of education in the development of learner's intellectual ability, acquisition of vocational skills, democratic ideals and citizenship, and the development of self-reliance and ability to cope adequately in a world of pressing problems.

Nwosu (2017) asserts that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. He believes that teacher education should be professionally developed through development of teachers as members of the teaching profession and, development of the teaching profession to which the teacher legally belongs. This assertion was given a fillip

in Nigeria's policy on education when the teacher training programme document noted as follows:

1. Government will direct the universities to work out a programme to make it possible for suitably qualified holders of the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) to complete a degree in education at the university two years instead of the present three;
2. The Federal Ministry of Education with the cooperation of States Ministries of Education and Higher Educational Institutions is already by working out a series of new programmes, courses to enable teachers to up-grade themselves from one level to another.
3. The establishment of the National Teachers' Institute in Kaduna. This institute was charged with organizing in-service teacher development programmes such that every teacher would have the opportunity of attending in-service training at regular intervals.

The development of teaching profession to which the teacher legally belongs is another step towards teaching professionalism in Nigeria. In line with the characteristics of a profession, Nwosu (2017) points out the following:

1. Prestige-holding occupation;
2. Rendering of essential services;
3. Systematic corpus of knowledge;
4. Provides for professional development;
5. Code of conduct.

The teaching profession has a corpus of knowledge that enables teachers to render essential services to the society. Teaching is more than doing and the job of the teacher is always concerned with developing human beings at their most impressionable stage.

Children differ in intelligence, aptitude, interests and temperaments. The teacher should understand the human developmental process and the variabilities of each child in order to take the child to the next level. He is to transmit the accumulated knowledge of the past and interpret it with reference to the present; and be able to take this knowledge of the present into the future. As pointed out by Dewey in Okere (2024) the teacher must be able to inhabit both the world of the learner and of the adult society in order to establish a “continuum” between them. Thus, he should understand major trends in contemporary civilization and prepare the youth to meet adequately the problems they will encounter at their mature period.

Teacher education prepares him to be an agent of social change and reform in the society. Teacher’s changing role in the contemporary society has been described by Jeffreys in Ofoego (2016:48) when he noted that:

Education is not only something that happens inside school buildings. Nor must the teacher’s outlook to be bounded by the school walls. If the teacher’s function is to teach children to read, write and count, and no more than that, he can perhaps do his job without looking beyond the classroom. But it is the teacher’s business to help boys and girls to understand the world they live in, and to take their place in it, he must himself have some understanding of that world.

The foregoing means that the teacher has the onerous task of guiding the developmental process of the child both inside and outside the classroom setting as envisioned in the Nigerian philosophy of education-the provision of equal educational opportunities inside and outside the formal school system, (Nwosu, 2017). The teacher is the builder of tomorrow; he affects eternity and nobody can forecast how far his effects can reach.

The teacher education provides for professional development of in-coming members in order to acquaint them with the relevant knowledge, skills and techniques for teaching. Such training programmes help to expose teachers to the changing and new roles expected of them. It also equips them with pedagogical strategies that are learner-centered. These instructional strategies encourage critical thinking, co-operation, collaboration, effective communication, hands-on experience and active participation of the learner (Ejiogu, Udechukwu & Ejiogu, 2023). Teachers professional training equally require code of ethics. Ethical codes are values, guides and social control principles, which chart and circumscribe the conduct of members of an organization (Nwosu, 2017:26). These principles are the norms of behaviour which are regarded by members of any organization as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour and by so doing determine right or wrong conducts which can be rewarded or punished. Teachers code of ethics are enshrined in a document titled, “Nigeria Teachers Service Manual” which was published in 1987. The document emphasized key issues relating to “strategies for professionalizing teaching”, the roles of teacher organizations such as the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT), the contributions of teachers and the various cadres of the teaching profession; the categories of teacher and their various levels of registration; the roles and responsibilities of both principals of secondary schools and the head-teachers at the primary education levels etcetera (Nwosu, 2017). In brief, the code of ethics for teachers provides for the teacher’s roles and responsibilities to the students, stakeholders in education but also, the commitment of teachers to professional ideals. This is done to ensure teacher’s discipline, enhance commitment to duties and encourage societal recognition of the teaching profession.

Consistent with the foregoing, teacher education in Nigeria has the following objectives:

- (a) To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system
- (b) To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers
- (c) To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community and society at large and to enhance their commitment to national objectives
- (d) To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation
- (e) To enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession (Nwosu, 2017:40).

Following the objectives of teacher education in Nigeria, the need for mastering the subject-matter and professional training cannot be over-emphasized. Three elements that need to be integrated in the teaching and learning process are the capabilities of the learner, the content of the curriculum and the teacher and his method of teaching. The curriculum and pedagogy are within the power of man to design. The role of the teacher in achieving the objectives of the above philosophy would depend on his knowledge of the subject matter (content knowledge) and the teaching methodologies (pedagogical knowledge). Effective teacher education programme should be concerned with four basic components: general education, specialized knowledge; practice and unified theory (Brameld in Okere, 2018).

General education is concerned with knowledge in the main stream of humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences.

Specialized knowledge: The teacher is saddled with the task of developing the intellectual and emotional state of the learners. With regard to specialized knowledge which qualifies teaching as a profession; the teacher should be a master of the principles

and practices of his specialization and the inter-play with other disciplines to make his teaching effective and efficient.

Practice: The teacher should be grounded in the theory and practice of his profession. The practice will enable him to unravel the principles and methods that underlie his subject matter discipline and make him able to distil hands-on information to the learners.

Unified Theory: The teacher should also understand the philosophy behind his job and the integration among the various disciplines. Through this means, he should be able to navigate the world of the learner through dark and shadow of ignorance to the limelight of knowledge and understanding.

Teacher Education in Nigeria in Retrospect

The education of teachers has progressed from the missionary/colonial period to post independence and the contemporary period. The missionary education recognized the need to supply the traders with native assistance who would read, write and talk a little English; produce teachers and preachers for the Christian churches; and prepare pupils for entrance into an English type of grammar school. These aims conditioned in no small measure the educational practices and conditions during the colonial era.

Following the recommendations of the national curriculum conference of 1969, teacher education occupied a pre-eminent position with regard to training of highly motivated, conscious, and successful classroom teachers for all levels of education, encourage in teachers the spirit of enquiry, creativity, nationalism, the social life of home and community, as well as the provision of intellectual and professional background for their role in the society (Uruakpa in Okere, 2020). Also, the 1969 curriculum conference provided for the recruitment of teachers into the teaching profession. These teachers were examined, awarded certificates and paid stipulated salaries. The conference aimed at making teaching a profession (Njoku, 2025). Furthermore, in reflecting the launching of

the Universal Primary Education (UPE) another milestone in teacher training programme was marked. According to Njoku (2025) Chief Awolowo who won the House of Assembly seat in the west in 1955 made a proposal to the Regional House for intensive teacher-training programme. This proposal paid off when the number of enrolment of school children rose from 457,000 in 1955 to 1,080,303 in 1959 (Njoku, 2025:157).

The Report of the National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos in September 1969, made its prescription of the aims and objectives of education in a free and independent “Nigeria”. The conference, evidently reflecting the experiences elsewhere and in keeping with the needs of the time and the circumstances of the age and also in portraying the national purpose, outlined what may be called “The five Cardinal Principles of Education in an Independent Nigeria” as follows:

1. Education for self-realization;
2. Education for national consciousness;
3. Education for national unity;
4. Education for social and political progress;
5. Education for scientific and technological awareness.

The foregoing is an indication that the trends in aims and objectives are more towards the reflection of the needs of the time and the circumstances of the age. That is trend toward making education more relevant.

Educational trends extended to organization and administration. Government took over the provision and management of primary and secondary education in their areas of jurisdiction from the erstwhile voluntary agencies. States created school boards or local education authority while the Federal government delved into the establishment of unity schools and the management of higher education and the creation of the Federal Inspectorate of education. (Uruakpa in Okere, 2022).

Trends in Content and Processes

Vast changes are today taking place in the content of the school curriculum. These are most remarkable in the areas of Science and mathematics. The revolution which started in the areas of science and mathematics has been filtering into the schools. Prominent among them are; STEM- (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), NERDC- (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council), etcetera. There are scores of new science and mathematics programmes all over the world and they are all knocking at the doors of our schools in this country. In Nigeria, a number of Curriculum Development Organizations or Projects are emerging: Notable among these are NERC, SESAC and CUDIMAC. These new programmes are not only introducing new contents into the school curriculum but they are introducing new methodologies, new concepts, and new technologies.

Teacher Education in Contemporary Period

Teaching in the 21st century period requires teachers that are knowledgeable in both the content and pedagogy as well as information technology. There is a shift in emphasis in the teaching and learning process from behaviourism and teacher-centered approach of traditional education to cognitivism, constructivism and connectivism. The emphasis on new strategies and techniques is to facilitate deep learning, motivate learners and facilitate collaboration and learner engagement. The techniques and strategies involved in this 21st century teaching include; think-pair-share, picture walk, venn diagram, concept map etcetera. These strategies are learner-centered because they engage the learner in activities and help to achieve collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking skills.

Teacher education in Nigeria has embraced the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education. ICT covers a wide range of technologies,

tools and devices used for transmitting, storing, creating, sharing or exchange information (Eze, Iwuamadi, & Ajeka, 2017). In this classroom, computers, devices such as Smart phones, media players, digital and video cameras can be used to enhance teaching and learning. The benefits of these technologies and devices to teachers include:

1. Supporting a variety of teaching strategies like collaborative and inquiry-based learning;
2. Access to resources, adequate knowledge of ICT can ease access to internet resources for teaching and learning;
3. Improving and widening learning environment, the use of display technologies, online teaching can widen and improve the teaching and learning environment;
4. Supporting learning strategies such as collaborative and project-based learning;
5. Accommodating a variety of learning styles;
6. Improving motivation and engagement and;
7. Enhancing and supporting the development of skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and problem solving.

The effectiveness and efficiency of ICT in education depends on the levels of awareness, funding and training of teachers to embrace its use in education. This would require the recruitment and selection of highly dedicated and committed teaching personnel in the nation's educational institutions.

Implications for Nigerian Education

The foregoing discussions have implications for Nigerian education in the following ways:

Educational policy formulation: This should be adapted to the mental, aptitudinal occupational and traditional life of the Nigerian society in a manner that reflect the

changing circumstances and progressive ideas compatible with human growth and development

Training of teachers: Teachers should be professionally trained to enhance their numbers qualifications, experiences and character for the interest of national development.

- The content and method of teaching in all subjects should be adapted to the conditions of Nigeria.
- The programme of teacher training should be integrated with new technologies and strategies to meet global competitiveness.
- There is also implication for instructional pedagogy. There is need for a shift from conventional teaching methods to more interactive 21st century teaching methods to ensure collaboration, communication and critical thinking skills.

From the foregoing implications, the challenges to effective teacher training programmes should be addressed in order to realize the objectives of teacher education. These challenges are discussed below.

Teacher Training Based Challenges to Nigerian Education

As noted in the introduction, teacher education in Nigeria is challenged by the problem of selection and recruitment, the funding of teacher training institutions, the professional development of teachers, and the organization and control of training institutions. The recruitment of competent people into the teaching profession is a perennial problem all over the world. But education anywhere must attract high caliber teaching personnel in order to improve its quality and productivity. As noted by Ukeje in Okere (2022), the system of training teachers is the keystone of any national educational system; in a rapidly developing country such as Nigeria, the efficiency of teacher training

will be the main determinant factor in success or failure of education to meet the nation's needs.

Conclusion

Teacher education should aim at enabling students to acquire critical thinking skills, collaboration, problem-solving skills and creative abilities to navigate the challenges of the 21st century teaching and learning. These objectives align with the Nigerian national objectives and these make teacher training critical to the nation's developmental quest. Because teachers are knowledgeable and experienced people, their role in national development cannot be overemphasized. On the basis of the foregoing, if teacher education must bring the needed social change and reform in the nation's education system, the study makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. Teachers should be properly trained for their job.
2. Education should be highly organized, controlled and funded for effective teaching and learning.
3. The school authority should provide the information and communication technologies (ICTs) for effective teaching and learning.
4. Teachers should be made to embrace the new technologies in teaching.
5. Nigerian education should impart critical skills of collaboration, problem-solving, student engagement and creativity into the learners.

References

- Agarwal, J.C. (2020). Philosophical foundations of education. Shri Vinod: Pustak Mandir.
- Ejiogu, C., Udechukwu, A., & Ejiogu, C. (2023) Teacher's professional development manual. A publication of UBEC/IMSUBEB, Owerri.

<https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jtese>

- Eze, R, Iwuamadi, F. & Ajeka, P. (2017). Essentials of curriculum development. Owerri: Mercy Divine Publishers.
- National Council for Teacher Education (2023). Teacher education <https://www.britannica.com>
- Njoku, M.U. (2025). The teaching profession in Nigeria. Owerri: Zobby Ihema Concept.
- Nwosu, O. (2017). Ethics and the teaching profession: Correlation matrix and critical challenges for the educational administrator in the 21st century. Aba: Abia State University.
- Ofoego, C.O. (2016). Philosophy of education: Focusing higher institutions. Owerri: Wilderness Voice Press.
- Okere J.E (2022). Dewey and Montessori Philosophy as Backgrounds for Entrepreneurial Skills in Childhood Education and Sustainable Development. 2(1) 40-48.
- Okere, J.E (2018). Role of the teacher for value education curriculum in Nigeria. *Journal of Education Horizon* 10-12. Pg.46-47.
- Okere, J.E (2022). Equal educational opportunity and self-reliant education: The Nigerian Experience. Philosophers of Education Association of Nigeria (PEAN). 261-270.
- Okere, J.E. (2020). Education and sustainable national development. A publication of the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State, Nigeria. OWIJOPPA Vol.4, (3) Pg.84-86.
- Okere, J.E. (2021). Basic Education for National Integration. Nigerian Journal of Educational Philosophy. 32, 172-181.
- Okere, J.E. (2024). The Development of Pedagogical Knowledge and the Imperative of Quality in the Teaching Profession. A Publication of Nigerian Journal of Multi-disciplinary Education 15 (10) 25-33.