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[Teacher Education in Nigeria: Past, Present and Future Challenges.](#)

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Introduction

The history of western education in Nigeria was intimately bound up with the history of western education in Europe. During and after the Dark Ages in Europe, the church dominated the business of education and this had a tremendous impact on the intellectual life of people not only in Europe and America but also in the British colonial territories of Asia and Africa. Historically, the British imperial ambition and effective occupation of Nigeria dated back to the second half of the 19th century even though some Europeans including British traders had assumed trading activities with the people in the coastal areas of the region since 1533 (Osokoya 2008). It is on record that the British naval forces started their pre-occupation of Southern Nigeria in 1851 when they bombarded the city of Lagos to punish Kosoko the King of the city who continued with the obnoxious slave trade despite its abolition in the British empire in 1833. Barely ten years after the bombardment, the British government annexed the city to the British Crown (Osokoya 2008). It was only in 1900 that the British flag was flown in the Northern Nigeria (Abubakar, 1980). Britain thereafter adopted a number of measures including coercion and diplomacy to remove all visible African opposition to her full central authority of the Nigerian nation. In fact, with the amalgamation of the Northern protectorate with the Colony and Southern Protectorate in 1914, Britain had succeeded in making herself the sole paramount ruler over a people of different cultures and multi-lingual communities which she unilaterally named Nigeria. Interestingly, western education in the area preceded the establishment of the British Crown as the European Christian missions had free hand in the provision of western education to the people in the area a decade before and about three decades after imperial occupation.

Education all over the world is seen as a process of transmitting the cultural heritage, stabilizing the present and improving or changing the future of the people. The school system in this regard is generally accepted as a major agent of education. This makes the factor of the teacher central in the task of education. Today, teacher education is considered to be the foundation for quality and relevance in education at all levels.

This article aims at reviewing current literature on the historical trends and dynamics of teacher education in Nigeria since the colonial era. Specifically, the paper focuses on the following:

- The beginning of Teacher Education in Nigeria.
- The effect of regionalization on teacher education.

- Teacher Education after independence.
- The current dispensation of teacher education vis a vis policy guidelines, access, curriculum development and delivery,
- The challenges of teacher education in Nigeria for a better world.

Foundation of Teacher Education in Nigeria.

Two accounts of missionary endeavours to promote western education in Nigeria preceded the imperial occupation and were well documented by African historians of education. (Fafunwa 1991, Taiwo 1980, Osokoya 1989). The first account was the contact made by the Portuguese merchants in the first half of the 15th century. As early as 1472, the Portuguese had landed in Benin City (a Nigerian city in the present south-south geo-political zone) for trading purposes. They therefore established trading posts along the coastal areas of Nigeria including Lagos and Brass. Meanwhile, as they realised the need to communicate with the people of the area in a common language and possibly share a common faith with their customers, they invited the Roman Catholic mission from their home country who eventually founded schools and churches along the trading posts. By 1515, a school had been founded in the Obas palace in Benin city while a seminary to train African priests and teachers to manage the churches and schools was founded in Sao Tome (an island off the coast of Nigeria) in 1571. This encounter was however an abortive experience as the Portuguese influence faded away as a result of the inter-tribal wars that ravaged the area for about 300 years over the greed to catch slaves for exportation to Europe and America as a result of the greed to catch African slaves (Fafunwa 1991).

The second missionary attempt however was successful and had a lasting impact on the people of Nigeria. Between 1842 and 1892, eight different Christian missions had established themselves in different parts of southern Nigeria while several abortive attempts were made by some missions to penetrate into the Islamic areas of the north. The Wesleyan Methodist, the first to arrive, confined themselves to the south-western part of Yoruba land with their strength concentrated in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ibadan. The Church Missionary Society (C.M.S), by far the largest, concentrated in the Yoruba land and Niger Delta (Osokoya 2010). The United Presbyterian church from Scotland concentrated effort in Old Calabar. The Southern American Baptist, found strength in Lagos, Abeokuta and Ogbomoso while the Qua Iboe mission from protestant Ireland, established themselves along the Qua Iboe river. These missions on arrival founded schools with curriculum heavily weighted on the three Rs- reading, writing and arithmetic. Mission schools were inadequately funded as the missions enjoyed virtually no financial support from the home missions. Schools were run on the limited funds subscribed by the local congregations. The teachers appointed were untrained and unqualified as teacher education programmes were not available in the country then. Attempts made in these early years of formal education to recruit teachers from the West Indies and the older British settlements of West Africa did not solve the problem too. Painting the picture of teachers employed in the mission schools in 1901, (Afigbo 1968) quoted the then inspector of school who wrote:

Very few of the teachers in the schools in the protectorate hold any certificate or have any training as teachers. They are for the most part mission agents of whose duties teaching in the mission schools forms only a part and no educational qualification or attainment are required for them.

Historically, the first teacher training institution in Nigeria was founded by the Church Missionary Society in 1859. The school established in Abeokuta and named "The training Institution" was moved to Lagos in 1867 when the missionaries were expelled from the town (Fafunwa 1991). The school was later moved to Oyo in 1896 and renamed St. Andrews College, Oyo. The Baptist mission followed the example of the CMS and founded a teacher training college at Ogbomosho in 1897. In the same vein the Wesleyan Methodist founded Wesley College Ibadan in 1905. The first teacher training in northern Nigeria was Nassarawa College founded by the colonial government in 1909.

The main concern of the missions teacher training institution was to produce school masters who are to graduate to classroom teachers, catechists, deacons and priests (Osoba and Fajana 1980). Therefore the subjects taught in the teacher training at the period included: the new testament criticism, Christian faith, school method and management, preaching and theology, hygiene, geography, history, English among others (Fafunwa 1991). The operation of teacher education in the period was heavily criticized by the Phelps Stokes Commission Report of 1922 for its irrelevant and poorly conceived curriculum, inadequate supervisory system and the high rate of teacher-pupil ratio.

In 1929, Mr. E.R.J. Hussey, the first director of education, re-organised the teacher training system in Nigeria along the suggestions given by the Phelps Stokes Report. Meanwhile, he centralised the control of education in Nigeria by merging the existing two departments of education in the northern and Southern provinces. He thereafter created two types of teacher training institution namely.

- The Elementary Training Centre (ETC). This is a two year course leading to Teachers Grade III certificate for lower primary school teachers and;
- The Higher Elementary Training College H.E.T.C. also lasting for another two years and leading to Teachers Grade II Certificate.

Another historical landmark in the development of teacher education in Nigeria was the establishment of Yaba Higher College by the British Colonial Administration in 1932. The College ran a three-year diploma teacher education programme from its inception. Unfortunately, the Yaba Higher College suffered immensely during the Second World War. Its campus and medical school were acquired by the army for war purposes. The college was finally absorbed by University College Ibadan in 1947. The diploma course was discontinued in 1950. Teacher education programme in Nigeria was further enhanced when the University College Ibadan, founded in 1948 introduced a one- year diploma course in education as from 1957/58 session.

Regionalization and Teacher Education

The 1946 Richards constitution divided the country into three regions- East, West, and North and each with a regional assembly. The regions were dominated by three political parties- National Convention of Nigerian Citizen (N.C.N.C) in the east, Action Group (A.G.) in the west and the Northern People's Congress (N.P.C) in the north respectively. The 1951 Macpherson constitution further strengthened regionalism and particularly empowered each region to pass laws on education. The regionalization of education in Nigeria set the stage for intensive political rivalry in the provision of social services particularly education for the governed in their respective areas. For the western and Eastern Regional Governments, education was utmost priority.

The Western Regional government embarked on Free Universal Primary Education in 1955, while the Eastern Regional government followed suit in 1957. Northern regional government did not embark on the Free Universal Education programme until the project was launched nationwide in September 1976. The Lagos Municipal Government launched the UPE programme in January 1957. The implementation of free universal primary education programmes in the 1950s gave rise to crash programmes for massive production of trained teachers particularly in the western region. New teacher training colleges were founded while some of the old ones were expanded to meet the demand for teachers.

Teacher Education after independence

Nigeria got her independence from the British imperialist in October 1960. She however experienced a Civil war between 1968 and 1970 which had an adverse effect on her socio-economic development and consequently her educational system. The experiences of the civil war however rekindled Nigerians faith in education as government saw education as the major vehicle for national rehabilitation, reconstruction and reconciliation. The military unlike the civilian heavily depended on centralised administration. It launched the Universal Primary Education nationwide in 1976. The UPE gave rise to unprecedented growth not only in the primary but also at the secondary and tertiary levels. The demand for teacher education was enormous. The federal Government took over the financial responsibility for all Grade II teachers' Colleges in the Federation as part of the programme for the UPE scheme. In addition, the federal Government awarded bursaries to all pre-service teachers in the Colleges of Education and Universities. In addition the Federal Government founded more teacher training institutions with diversified programmes while universities were expanded.

Current dispensation of Teacher Education

Today, teacher education is much improved than it was before independence and few decades thereafter. The National Policy on Education, published in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1998 and 2004 clearly articulates the importance attached to teacher education and affirms that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers". The Policy gives the goals of teacher education as:

- 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.

The Policy makes it mandatory for all teachers in Nigeria to be trained and stipulate Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) as the minimum qualification to the profession. The policy also provides that "teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and in the curriculum" and that teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in their profession. It further recognizes the

need for in- service training “as an integral part of continuing teacher education”.

The statutory responsibility for teacher education in Nigeria today is vested in College of Education, Institutes of Education, Polytechnics, National Teachers Institute (by distance) and University Faculties of Education. The Polytechnics and Colleges of Education award the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) which is a sub-degree but professionally demanding diploma obtainable after three years of full-time study. The admission requirements for the NCE programme is Senior Secondary Certificate or its equivalent with passes in five subjects including English language. The curriculum for NCE teachers is well designed to produce teachers exposed to a breadth of studies covering all that is required to make them competent professionals. New courses such as computer education, mathematics and General English have been made compulsory for all NCE students. Also relevant themes such as Nigerian constitution, environment/ conservation education, population and family life education, HIV/AIDS education, drug abuse and women’s education have recently been infused into the curriculum.

The National Teacher’s Institute (NTI) was established in 1976 by Decree No. 7 of 1976 to offer upgrading programmes for teachers through distance learning. Over the years NTI has been providing in -service training for teachers during school holidays and week-ends for the award of NCE, B.Ed and Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) certificates. Institutes of Education in the various universities have also been involved through distance learning and part-time courses the training of teachers for N.C.E, B.Ed AND PGDE Certificates. Faculties of Education prepare pre-service teachers for B.Ed. B.A. Ed. and M.Ed degrees. There are four major requirements for the degree programme in the Nigerian universities, namely:

- General studies
- Educational studies
- Studies related to the students’ intended field of teaching
- Teaching practice

Challenges of Teacher Education.

The future challenges of teacher education in Nigeria are numerous but the following have been selected for discussion in this paper.

Quality assurance and internal efficiency.

The academic and emotional qualities of intending teachers for training are critical for quality assurance and internal efficiency for professionalism in teaching in the future. Candidates who usually apply to higher institutions for teacher education in Nigeria are those who have either been denied admission or are basically unqualified for admission into such popular professions including medicine, law, engineering, architecture etc. The usual shortage of applicants seeking admission into teaching programmes in our national universities is a pointer to why admission selection could not be rigorous as it is in other notable and popular professions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) recommends that teachers should be selected on the basis of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. In the United Kingdom, applicants must be seen to possess certain personal qualities and

characteristics before they are admitted for training (Lassa 2000). Yet in most of the Nigerian universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, student's admission were usually based on obtaining the minimum academic requirements while other requirements such as emotional stability, physical uprightness and communication proficiencies were hardly given consideration. In addition to the above, the low quality of teachers produced through in-service training by N.T.I. is a serious challenge to teacher education. Nigerian scholars noted that most of the teachers upgraded to Teachers Grade II by N.T.I were very deficient not only in the academic subjects they teach, but also in techniques of teaching (Obanya 2004, Eukora 2003). The most dishearten challenge is the ongoing Pivotal Teacher Training Programme (PTTP) which is currently being executed by the National Teachers Institute (NTI).

The PTTP is a crash programme of the Federal government to raise teachers to implement the UBE programme. It was introduced to address the gross shortage of qualified teachers at the inception of UBE in 1999 in an apparent search for cost effective alternatives for bridging the gap (FGN 2003). The PTTP is a 15-month course including 12 week's school experience and three-month internship in a primary school. The mode of teaching combines face-to-face contact at week-ends and holidays, self-instruction course materials and school experience after which the candidate is qualified to teach. Critics of the programme however condemned the low academic standard of the recipients and the poor quality of admission requirements for the programme (Eukora et al 2003).

Professionalization of Teaching

Teaching in Nigeria cannot yet be regarded as a profession in the true sense of the word. This is because a large number of untrained and uncertificated personnel are still retained on the job. Many unqualified teachers are still in the employment role of some states teaching service boards while most higher education lecturers are yet to undergo training in education. Until government makes it mandatory for all involved in the task of teaching to be qualified in Nigeria, teaching will still continue to be any man's business and cannot claim professionalism as other notable professions such as law, medicine, engineering etc.

Brain drain syndrome.

The quality of education in Nigeria is reduced in the recent years because of the brain drain phenomenon which led to the drift of more able and more experienced university lecturers to countries where they were offered better remunerations. This brain drain syndrome are attributable to a large extent, to lack of incentives to improve performance, very poor equipped working environments, inadequate social recognition, lack of control over working conditions and late payment of salaries of teachers. The reliance on inexperienced lecturers in the various educational fields in the country definitely affects the quality of students work, and of course, the lecturers of the future. This vicious circle contributes to the low status of education in the universities, colleges of education as well as secondary and primary schools.

Low morale of teachers

The problems of attrition in the teaching force and the dwindling enrolment in teacher education programmes had immensely contributed to the low social status of teachers in Nigeria. Teachers' conditions of service are not enticing enough to attract and retain the best brains in Nigeria.

Globalization and Insufficient Knowledge of Information Communication Technology (ITC).

Another major challenge to teacher education in Nigeria is that of globalization. The knowledge and use of computer is a necessity for all teachers if we are to be relevant in the future. Teachers need to be trained and re-trained in Information Communication Technology (ICT) more so that the world is gradually becoming a global village. For our future teachers to be able to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times.

Operation of Continuous Assessment Practice

Perhaps, a revolution in teacher education programme in Nigeria is the issue of improved assessment practice of students' learning outcomes. The National Policy on Education (1981) recommended the implementation of continuous assessment practice at all levels of education in Nigeria, Continuous assessment is finding out what the students have gained from learning activities in terms of knowledge, thinking and reasoning, character development and industry over a period of time. Scholars in evaluation (Falayajo 2004, Obanya 1982, Emeke 1999, Yoloye 1984 and Bajah 1984) adjudge continuous assessment as the best thing that could happen to the system of assessment in the Nigerian educational Institutions. Yet, its implementation has been partially undertaken because teachers have not been well trained for it. It is necessary to include training in continuous assessment practice in the pre-service and in-service programmes of teacher education in Nigeria.

Summary, Conclusion and recommendations

Teacher education has been considered very relevant for Nigeria's societal development in this article because it serves as the foundation for quality and relevant education at all levels of the system. In re-assessing the trends and dynamics of teacher education in Nigeria since the colonial era, some major historical landmarks were identified. The first was the free universal primary education policies of the Action Group and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which led to a great demand for trained teachers in the Nigerian schools. The role of the Military administration of General Muritala Muhammed/Obasanjo in the provision of free universal primary education nations-wide in 1976 was also a major mile-stone in the growth of teacher education. The needs to meet the basic teacher education requirements for the new universal basic education as well as the implementation of 2004 National Policy on Education were recognized as historical landmarks. It is noted that access to teacher education programmes in the Nigerian higher education did not conform with the international standards as laid down by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). There was the brain drain syndrome as well as insufficient knowledge of Information Communication Technology among the Nigerian teachers.

There is therefore the need for all Nigerian teachers to be proficient in computer education. It is only when we are well equipped in computer that we can imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the 21st century. There is also the need for training our future teachers on entrepreneurial skills development. It is only when teachers are well equipped with such skills that they can transfer them to students. Finally, the task of improving teachers' welfare must be addressed by our governments in Nigeria. The working environment must be well equipped to retain qualified and experienced teachers in our classrooms. Teachers' salaries should be paid regularly while other social benefits should be provided to motivate and retain teachers.

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