

Repositioning Nigerian Teacher Education For Cross Border Education: Past & Present

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Abstract: *The Nigerian educational system used to be admired hence people from other countries came to study in Nigeria. Then the graduates from Nigerian universities were widely sought after by multinational companies and such graduates were sought for by world first class universities for post graduate programmes. During the period the teacher education programme on ground was rich and diversified. Then all efforts were geared towards taking the Nigerian teacher education programme to higher notch, the Nigerian education system attracted students and scholars from other countries of the world. The cross boarder education enriched the education system further and produced functional and self-reliant graduates. However, the story has changed. The system is no longer enviable hence students from outside the country no longer desire to study in Nigeria. Even candidates from Nigeria who desire functional education look for admission outside Nigeria. And very few scholars from outside Nigeria are teaching in Nigerian educational institution. There is therefore dearth of cross boarder education due to the poor quality of the education enterprise. This may not be unconnected to the poor quality of teacher education in the country. This paper examined the Nigerian teacher education and advocates for its repositioning through some measures for cross boarder education.*

Keywords: *Teacher education, cross boarder education.*

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I. Introduction

The Nigerian educational system used to be among the top notch across Africa and indeed made some impressionistic impact on not only African countries but the western world as well. It even attracted foreign students who were replete in most of our institutions of higher learning then, especially the first generation universities like the; University of Lagos, University of Ibadan, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and Ahmadu Bello University. Babalola (2006) observed that at that time these first six Nigerian Universities (University of Ibadan, Ile Ife, Lagos, Benin, Nsukka and Zaria) competed favourably with any other university in the world as their graduates were sought for by many standard universities like University of Stanford, Arlington, Oxford and London, for entrance into their post-graduate courses. The graduates then used to be widely sort after by the best multi-national companies and corporate systems worldwide as opposed to today where no Nigerian university is among the top 6,000 universities around the globe. A litany of reasons could have been responsible for this shortfalls ranging from long rule of the military, poor funding of the education sector, poor remuneration of university personnel, dilapidating structures in institutions and universities, poorly equipped libraries with aged guides, aged research clinical gadgets, bad university roadways, insufficient water and epileptic power supplies among others; continual strikes by university staff which constitute obstacle to smooth covering of curriculum; lack of qualified teachers; poor planning; politicization of education; cultism; quest for paper qualification rather than expertise/ efficiency in areas of specialization and issues of discipline, among others.

II. Development Of Teacher Education In Nigeria

The importance of teacher education in the formation of the educational system cannot be overlooked and as such, much attention and efforts is expected to be directed towards this most critical area for the upliftment of the country, especially as it relates to cross border education. The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) (1998) while commenting on quality concerns in teacher education observed that the teacher is the most important element in any educational program. It is the teacher who is mainly responsible for the implementation of the educational process at any stage. This therefore implies that it is imperative to invest in

the preparation of teachers, so that the future of a nation is secure. The importance of competent teachers to a nation's educational system can in no way be overemphasized. The National Curriculum Framework 2005 places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education. The NCTE (1998) defined teacher education as a programme of education, research and training of persons to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. It further observed that Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. As noted by various actors in the education sector, 1906-1956, the program of teacher preparation was called teacher training which prepared teachers as mechanics or technicians. It had narrower goals with its focus being only on skill training. The perspective of teacher education was therefore very narrow and its scope was limited.

A cursory look at the quality of teacher education in the early 1990s shows a well monitored and adequately implemented teacher education. During this era, teachers were informed in what is known as apprenticeship pupil-teacher system of educating the incoming teachers in discussing this system of education. Adeyinka, (1971) noted that the missionaries trained their teachers through the apprenticeship pupil-teacher system. In such a system, the missionary teacher organized the school in his residence/ premises and some of his pupils lived with him as part of his family. Fajana (1970) added that at about 14 years, pupils ought to have written and passed the standard V examination. They were then recruited as teachers, but further received one hour instruction daily from the head teacher on teaching methodology. The duration of the course was two years, after which they would sit for the pupil-teacher examination. Besides being the foundation of teacher education, the significance of this system was that it enabled the student-teachers to receive further training and education while contributing their quota in the formal educational needs of the society through teaching other pupils. From this very humble beginning, the system has developed into a more complex one involving college institutions and universities. Fafunwa (1974) described the apprenticeship thus, the pre-requisite qualification for admission into a teacher training institution was standard IV. In addition, the candidate must have served as a pupil-teacher for two years, passed the pupil-teacher's certificate examination and would then qualify to act as an assistant teacher before starting another two-year training course in a teacher training institution. At the end of the two years, the candidate would sit for and pass a prescribed teachers' certificate examination and would be certified. With the development of the system, the need to review the principles and practice of teacher education arose, leading to the inauguration of the Phelps-Stokes commission to undertake the task. As tightly knitted as this system seemed, there were still some loopholes identified which led to the improvement of the system and this called for the institution of the Phelps Stoke and Ashby commissions.

Fafunwa (1974), noted that in order to re-orientate and re-organize the teacher education system along the lines suggested by the report of the Ashby commission to redress the problems of teacher education in the colony, two types of teacher-training institutions were recommended; the Elementary Training College (ETC), for lower primary school teachers, and the Higher Elementary Training College (HETC), for higher primary school teachers. Both the ETC and the HETC programs lasted for two years each and culminated in the award of Grades III and II Teacher's Certificates respectively. Any candidate willing to go for the ETC course would have served as a pupil-teacher for two years and on the successful completion of courses leading to the Grade III certificate had to teach again for at least two years before proceeding to the HETC for the two-year Grade II program. This signifies a radical departure from the system adopted by the Christian Missions as it represents a more standard approach towards teacher education, training and development.

However, the need for further reforms gave rise to the Ashby's commission. The Nigerian Federal Government in 1959 set up the Sir Eric Ashby Commission to investigate and determine the extent of manpower needs of the country, especially within the education sector, with an eye on the future. Urwick and Aliyu (2003) observed that after its works, the Ashby report prescribed that education was indeed the tool for achieving national economic expansion and the social emancipation of the individual and thus it recommended the establishment of four Federal Universities in the country, and also the introduction of some education-vital courses in them. Subsequently, five universities (instead of the recommended four) were established, viz: University of Nigeria, Nsukka (1960), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1962), University of Ife, now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, (1962), University of Lagos, Lagos (1962) and University of Ibadan, first established as University College, Ibadan in 1948. A decade later, further demand for manpower compelled the country to establish the University of Benin (1972). Ogunyinka, Okeke & Adedoyin (2015) noted that the implementation of the Ashby commission's report not only led to the establishment of universities and introduction of courses, but also birthed new degrees; Bachelor of Arts in Education [B.A (Ed.)] or Bachelor of Sciences in Education [B.Sc. (Ed.)] or Bachelor of Education [B.Ed.] respectively and also, some of the institutions ran programs leading to the award of Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE). From the foregoing, it is evident that the Ashby's commission played a part in the development of teacher education in Nigeria. In fact, one major significant event in the development of teacher education in Nigeria was the

transformation effect of the recommendations and subsequent implementation of the Ashby commission's report.

However, despite all these efforts put in place to progressively take the teaching profession to higher notch, unprecedented events like the Nigerian civil war, the military interruption of power and the introduction of the UPE in 1976 which raised the enrolment rate in the primary schools without enough teachers to meet up with the high enrolment, led to the disruptions of the conscious efforts in the building of teacher education, hence where we are presently.

III. Cross Border Tertiary Education in Nigeria: Past and Present

Cross-border tertiary education refers to the movement of people, programmes, providers, curricula, projects, research and services in tertiary (or higher) education across national jurisdictional borders. Cross-border education is a subset of educational internationalization and can be part of development cooperation projects, academic exchange programmes and commercial initiatives. Due to the outstanding teacher education which was the key ingredient for an efficient and effective educational system, reports were rife on the influx of international students into the shores of Nigeria for higher education in the early 90s but the reverse is the case today where one can hardly see any such thing happening. Okoroafor (2012) in buttressing the impeccability of the standards of higher education in the 80s and 90s, paid such glorying tribute on the dedication of the lecturers, the studiousness of the students as they did not forget nor lose memory of their records and accomplishments since their families and the society in general demanded excellence in our performance and students were determined to succeed the right way. Okoroafor described the heavy presence of foreign students in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria thus:

“Nigerian university that I used to know was a place suitable for academic pursuit that attracted foreign students from India, Pakistan, and many other countries and even American and British born Nigerians came home in droves for a shot at good education, laced with culture indoctrination. The quality of education was challenging and the environment was robust and inclusive” p: 13.

Okoroafor (2012) thereafter recalled the quality that the Nigerian universities used to be renowned for when at some point she produced professionals and great minds; a Nobel Laureate, business tycoons, inventors, professors, professionals, among others. He thus suggested that there is every need for Nigeria to re-examine those factors that contributed to the academic excellence of the glorious days and maybe take a note or two to help the current generation, the future leaders.

Also in identifying the presence of foreign students in Nigeria, Malumba, Abdulkarim, Kagiso, and Rohen (2008) observed that new patterns are emerging; West African students mainly migrate to Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and Senegal; in East Africa students migrate to Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania while in Southern Africa their main destination is South Africa. This can be attributed to the escalating cost of higher education in Europe and US and the recognition of programmes offered in these African institutions. However, as much as one agrees that the result of the movement of students to the African countries was as a result of the escalation of education costs in Europe and US, then one cannot suffix to add that if the African countries had nothing to offer in terms of the quality of their education, with focus on Nigeria, coming to study there would not have been an option.

Presently, the issue of foreign students in the Nigerian tertiary institutions is near to if not completely gone into oblivion, while Nigerian students are many in foreign universities. In fact Nigeria has been tagged one of the highest exporter of students to foreign schools for study. Higher institutions in Ghana, Togo, Republic of Benin, South Africa, among others, are rife with students from Nigeria and this should call for a real concern. A 2015 report by the Institute of International Education's Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange in the United States, claimed that 9,494 students from Nigeria were admitted in the 2014/15 academic session, making Nigeria the leading source of students from Africa and the 15th largest country worldwide among international students in the US. With regards to the present scarcity of dollars in Nigeria due to fall in oil prices, parents of many Nigerian students schooling overseas are really complaining of how tough it is to get forex and this is seen in the comments of a parent whose ward is schooling overseas, Mrs. Abigail Ademuyiwa, whose son is studying in the University of Kyiv, Ukraine. She observed that her son was in the final year, and had been seeking scholarship to complete his education following her inability to send money to him. According to her, she said “since last year the foreign exchange has affected the naira, the money I have been sending to him is no longer enough to take care of him, but he told me that he had been seeking scholarship there to complete his education, apart from engaging in menial jobs to cater for himself. He will graduate this year.” Many Nigerian students who could not cope with the harsh reality have been returning back to the country to complete their education. The Punch (2016) in a Saharan report observed that, many Nigerian students studying abroad have been seeking transfer to Nigerian universities to complete their education at home because of the scarcity of foreign exchange. Saturday PUNCH gathered that the students were forced to take the decision following the huge exchange rate which many parents could no longer afford. Some of the students told

Saturday PUNCH that they would prefer to return to the country to complete their studies, instead of going through difficulties and long waits for forex that is no longer available to them at the appropriate time. This explains the sorry state the Nigerian education system is in. Is it not instructive therefore for the Nigerian government and other stakeholders in Nigerian education sector to look into what the problem is and chart a way forward for improvement.

IV. Way Forward

There is no doubt therefore that the antecedent and the development of teacher education in Nigerian in the early 90s gave birth to a copious and engrossing educational system and this inevitably rubbed off on the influx of international students from Ghana, Togo, Cameroun, and a host of other African countries. Over the years, the gradual and eventual withdrawal of foreign students from the nation's higher institutions of learning cannot but draw the attention of well-meaning educationists, especially at this critical time when the effects of recession is biting hard and concerted efforts are being put in place to raise the income and perhaps see how education can be repositioned to facilitate the contribution in this regards. The governments and education stakeholders are thereby called upon to reconsider many aspects of the Nigerian tertiary education systems and strategies. Some measures are therefore suggested as ways for lighting up the educational system through upgrading the teacher education to a well-accepted and productive standard to deliver on this bid.

V. Internationalization of Teacher Education Curriculum

The teacher education curriculum should be upgraded to an accepted international standard in such a way as to have universal appeal and application as supported by the views of Varghese (2008), who noted that internationalization of education is the imparting of knowledge, skills and values which have universal appeal and application. It implies that a curriculum becomes cross-national and intercultural in nature. And according to Vaghese, this can happen through a variety of ways among which is a shift from producing for national markets to producing for international markets. This implies changing the orientation of courses offered in the local universities, which sometimes are referred to as "internationalization at home". Others are international students mobility, faculty exchange and development, research collaboration, foreign language study, building international perspectives, international networks, distance education, locally supported distance education, twinning programmes, articulation programmes, branch campuses, franchising agreements and international quality assurance systems. Douglas and Nielsen (2012) defined internationalization as a matter of integrating transnational elements into the 'purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education. That is, colleges and universities are internationalizing their behavior when they reshape their purposes to attract international students, to deploy their programmes across national borders, concentrate on internationally advantageous educational programme niches, restructure work roles or compensation systems to recruit, retain or manage employees. This internationalization would be of enormous benefits not only for teacher education but for the entire Nigeria social and economic development as it will attract back into our educational system foreign students thereby rise in the GDI.

VI. Reforms towards Increased Capacity of University Education in Nigeria

Of course this cannot be achieved by mere lips service or words without action since talk is cheap. Rather there should be concerted efforts towards addressing issues that often lead to strikes, rehabilitate dilapidated structures, adequately and qualitatively staff the institutions by shopping for the best brains and this can only be achieved with improved remuneration and lastly, proper funding should be instituted for institutions across the country.

Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria should be empowered by law to conduct regular standardized competency test for teachers who are already engaged in teaching and this will have to cover teachers at all levels of the educational system including lecturers. This will ensure that assessment of knowledge and or performance judged necessary for a specific situation is constantly checked and upgraded to suit into the changing demands of society. For example, a test for driver's license and a bar examination for a prospective attorney are both competency tests- both measure the knowledge and skills judged necessary for adequate performance in a specialized area. Similarly, competency tests for teachers refers to a test developed to measure the minimum knowledge and/ skills needed for the adequate performance of a teacher in the classroom and competency is a concept linking three parameters-knowledge, skills and attitude. It will therefore be appropriate if this competency test is done every five years. This period would have allowed the teachers attend conferences, seminars, workshops, among others, to enable them the opportunity to have developed them and garnered new and contemporary ideas in tune with globalization. Again, the competency test will add more value to the tested

and the entire system if it is done in the teachers' respective subject areas rather than some other vague concepts.

VII. Mentoring should be made an Integral part of Teacher Education

In many professions such as medicine, law, engineering and business, novices learn from an experienced practitioner to become more professionally competent by learning from these experienced practitioners who will guide them in their learning and continuous development for expertise and efficiency. And there is no better profession that desires this mentoring scheme as much as the teaching profession for efficiency and complementarity. Drapper (2004) sees mentoring as a close, intense, mutually beneficial relationship between someone who is older, wiser, more experienced and more powerful with someone younger or less experienced. This relationship is complementary.

Other measures that could be adopted to help in repositioning Nigeria teachers education for cross boarder education include: improved salary scale (Teachers' salary scale), training and retraining of teachers, professionalization of teaching, among others. When these measures or some of these measures are adopted it will go a long way in repositioning the Nigerian teacher education for cross boarder education.

VIII. Benefits of Cross Border Education

Students experience cultural enrichment by studying abroad, governments support mobility of both students and teachers in order to achieve mix of cultural, political, labour market and trade participation. Suppliers of education see foreign students as sources of revenue, there is the employment of teachers around the world to raise institutional quality and enrich students' learning opportunities (Okoli, 2013). Njuguna and Itegi (2013) observed that in cross border education, students and teaching staff share variety of benefits including maintenance of economic competitiveness and fostering human understanding across borders. This also comes as indirect investment in future economy, the labour market, and a boost to national educational demand to attain an international dimension of research and teaching, as well as institutions building on quality improvement. In agreeing that Cross-border higher education is a means for universities to show-case the African knowledge, Michael (1989) challenged African researchers to use indigenous resources and the hitherto untapped reserves of popular knowledge in order to identify, understand and act upon local development needs and avoid exploitative relations where such institutions are used as the launch pad for Western universities in the African region. Higher education and skills create the base of knowledge, self-reliance for Africa's future generations and the foundation from which ordinary Africans can set off in their career Ntuli (2010) challenged African leaders to ensure that countries in Africa are able to present our educated compatriots with competitive opportunities domestically, once they are qualified. They are expected to preserve their expertise to ensure the critical mass on the continent that will help to regenerate local knowledge and repackage it for the regional and international development as benefits of encouraging cross border education in Africa. Njuguna and Itegi (2013) observe that cross-border higher education provides opportunities for knowledge and technology acceleration including the promise to penetrate new markets, and also that cross-border higher education provides a chance for institutions and countries to present themselves in the world scene.

There is no gainsaying that the benefits of cross border education are enormous and inexhaustible, but most importantly the focus of this paper is that cross-border education comes handy in the fight against poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. In Nigeria, most specifically, with the recession and the dwindling nature of oil price in the international market and not also forgetting the paucity of forex, it beholds on the government and managers of education in Nigeria to rethink the quality of the education being made available thereby bringing to the fore the need for all hands to be on deck and attempt to use education to revamp the Nigerian economy through the enticing back into our tertiary Institutions, foreign students.

IX. Conclusion

The trust of this paper is to instigate in stakeholders and educational policy makers in Nigeria in general to see how ways can be proffered to return the Nigerian educational system back to its lost glory true the re-inventing of teacher education. Teacher education is one of the greatest ways through which the lost glory of education can be restored.

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