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[Moses Kayode Hazzan](#) \*

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*Article*

# Managing Teacher Education for Socio-Economic and Political Emancipation

Moses Kayode HAZZAN

Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; Email: moseshazzan4@gmail.com or moseshazzan8@gmail.com; Tel: +2348140718141

**Abstract:** A nation's social, economic, and political emancipation is ineluctably connected with functional education systems in which people learn to create new institutions, utilise new technologies, cope with vagaries and difficulties in their environment, and positively alter their behavioural patterns. Education in a broad sense improves the capabilities of individuals and the capacity of institutions and becomes a catalyst for the closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and political changes that are parts of the hallmarks of national development. Nevertheless, a teacher stands out as a crucial figure within any educational institution, wielding significant influence in effecting these changes and transformations. Teacher education is broad. It is based on the praxis that teachers are made in contrary to the assumption that teachers are born. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge but also requisite skills needed in carrying out his or her inestimable duties or services. The efficiency and effectiveness of every educational system hinge significantly on the educational achievements of teachers. After all, no education can surpass the quality of its educators. Thus, every nation places demands and expectations on the teacher, which need to be addressed by both initial and continuing teacher education. On this note, this paper examines teacher education with respect to its praxis and professionalism, examines the nexus between teacher education and socioeconomic as well as political emancipation, analyses the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria, and in the final analysis, gives recommendations based on the identified challenges.

**Keywords:** teacher education; praxis; professionalism; socio-economic and political emancipation; challenges

## 1. Introduction

Education is regarded as a veritable instrument for national growth and development. It produces different kinds of manpower such as engineers, teachers, lawyers, medical doctors, architects, soldiers, scientists, etc. equipped with knowledge and skills needed and instrumental to the societal socio-political and economic growth and development of a country (Thom-Otuya and Inko-Tariah, 2016). Similarly, the socio-economic and political emancipation of a country is invariably hinged on the functionality of the educational systems that such a country operates. Thus, the sayings that, "no society can develop beyond its educational system" and that "no education can rise above the quality of its teachers" (National Policy on Education {FRN}, 2013) could be deemed apt and axiomatic. Indeed, if students are considered the core of every educational system, then teachers undoubtedly represent the central hubs of the entire educational process.

Significantly, the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens while the quality of its citizens depends not exclusively but in crucial measure upon the quality of education and the quality of education depends (more than upon any single factor) upon the quality of their teachers (Ifunanya, Onyia and IketakuI, 2013). This shows the imperativeness of teacher education as the roles of teachers in every society become indispensable. Teachers are the essence of any educational endeavour, upon whom the vitality of the school system frequently relies. They belong to a profession with unparalleled potential to shape the social, economic, political, and moral trajectory of a nation.

This reality highlights the imperative for teacher education to be regarded as a sacred obligation, never to be trifled with, if teaching is to fulfill its professional duty of nurturing generations of profoundly responsible, disciplined, and productive citizens. (Uchechi, 2011).

Teacher education can be conceptualised as the policies and procedures designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, behaviour and skills they require to perform their tasks in the school and classroom effectively and efficiently (Kumar, 2010). It also involves the component of any educational system charged with the education and training of teachers to acquire competencies and skills of teaching for the improvement of the teachers, the students and the entire school system. In addition, teacher education is the process that nurtures prospective teachers and updates qualified teachers' knowledge and skills in the form of continuous professional development (Nnokam and Sule, 2017). It includes training and or education occurring before the commencement of service (pre-service) and during service (in-service or on-the-job).

The quality of teacher education is often dependent upon the quality of teacher educators. Similarly, the quality of pedagogical inputs in teacher education programmes and their effective utilisation to prepare prospective teachers depend largely on the professional competence of teacher educators and how it is utilised for strengthening the teacher education programme. Teacher education in Nigeria is overseen by Colleges of Education, Institutes of Education, the National Teachers Institute (NTI), and the Faculties of Education within Nigerian universities. Furthermore, Institutes of Education within universities offer distance learning and part-time courses, accommodating educators aiming for NCE, B.Ed., and PGDE certificates upon program completion. In contrast, faculties of education primarily concentrate on preparing pre-service teachers for qualifications spanning from B.Ed. to Ph.D.

Emancipation can be contextualised as the action or state of liberating oneself or others from any form of constraint or oppression. It encompasses the process of breaking free from shackles, whether physical, social, or psychological and gaining freedom and autonomy.; liberation or freedom from inhibition and convention (Akanbi and Jekayinfa, 2019). It could be described as the act or process by which a person, society or nation is free from the power, authority and control of another person or any institution that had hitherto been hampering the progress and or advancement of such a person, society or institution. Thus, the socio-economic and political emancipation of people in this study refers to the economic, social and political empowerment of people after receiving education which will essentially bring about their freedom and sustainable means of living. The current crisis in Nigerian education encompasses a multitude of challenges that deeply impact both the educational system and society at large. Some of the prominent issues include unemployment, poverty, corruption, crime, indiscipline, and underutilisation of capacities in all facets of human endeavour, which could be partly ascribed to the neglect of teacher education and the pitiable plight of teachers in every phase of education in the country (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015).

One of the hallmarks of a nation's quest for achieving self-reliance in all its facets as characterised by social, economic, and political freedom with an appreciable level of growth, development, and welfare is teacher education. Also, for a nation to ensure that its youth are taught valuable skills and are part of a thriving economy, the country must implement a comprehensive teacher education programme (Adewuyi, 2012). In the light of the foregoing, this paper examines teacher education in the context of its praxis and professionalism, x-rays the nexus between teacher education and socio-economic as well as political emancipation, analyses the challenges of teacher education in Nigeria and in the final analysis, draws a conclusion and makes recommendations based on the findings from the study.

## **2. Teacher Education: Praxis and Professionalism**

Teacher education is predicated on the theory that: teachers are made, not born in contrast to the assumption that teachers are born, not made. Since teaching is considered an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge but also skills inherent in praxis and professionalism. Teacher education is broad. It encompasses teaching skills, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. Teaching skills involve the provision for training and practice in different

techniques, approaches and strategies that would help the teachers plan and impart instruction, provide appropriate reinforcement and conduct an effective assessment. The skills also encompass effective classroom management skills, preparation and use of instructional materials as well as communication skills.

On the other hand, Pedagogical theory includes the philosophical, sociological and psychological considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing teaching skills in the classroom. The theory is stage-specific and based on the needs and requirements that are characteristic of that stage. In addition, professional skills have to do with the techniques, strategies and approaches that would help teachers grow in the profession and also work towards the growth of the profession. These include soft skills, counseling skills, interpersonal skills, computer skills, information retrieving and management skills and above all lifelong learning skills.

Teacher Education has invariably received strong emphasis in the national policy (FRN, 2013) on education because of the belief that there is no educational system that can surpass the calibre of its teachers. Thus in the document (FRN, 2013), the goals of Teacher Education are spelled out as follows: produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of the educational system; further encourage the spirit of inquiry and creativity in teachers; help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals; provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to changing situations; and enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession (FRN, 2013).

In addition, it is also stated that teacher education shall continue to take cognizance of changes in methodology and the curriculum and teachers shall be regularly exposed to innovations in the profession. In addition to this, the policy equally specifies that provisions would be made for the improvement and regulation of career-long professional development of teachers through the provision of a wide range of programmes and multiple pathways to provide serving teachers with regular opportunities for updating their knowledge and skills; improved conditions of service and incentives to motivate teachers and make the teaching profession more attractive; setting professional standards for teacher educators who train new teachers and revamping of teacher education curricula and training (FRN, 2013).

Furthermore, the term 'praxis' is an ancient Greek concept, made popular by the prominent Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. According to him, praxis is a synthesis of theory and practice in which each informs the other (Freire, Paulo, 1985). The kernel of his thought could be encapsulated in the aphorism that 'action without reflection is blind, and reflection without action is impotent'. Praxis appears in different fields and disciplines, including education, political theory, social and community work, etc. Pedagogical praxis is an integral, but mainly important, part of the process of pre-gradual preparation of teachers for all levels of education. Nevertheless, pedagogical praxis is realised mainly for the reason of developing the professional competencies of future teachers. Pedagogical praxis as a form of experience-based and professional learning enables the students of teaching (the trainees) to develop their professional as well as personal competencies in cooperation with the trainers (Sirotová, 2016).

Teacher education is considered as training for instrumental problem solving, which broadly implies the application in the classroom of theories and techniques of teaching and teaching. The ideal, of course, is to provide teacher education that seamlessly integrates the theory of education and its practice in the real world of education so that future teachers can translate new views and theories about learning into actual teaching practices in the schools (Lunenberg, Korthagen and Swennen, 2007). The teacher education programme is divided into three categories. First, the initial teacher training (a pre-service course before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher) - this training programme takes place mostly in institutions of higher education. Second is the induction of teachers. This invariably deals with the process of offering guidance and assistance in the initial years of teaching or the first year in a certain school. The third equally has to do with teacher development or continuing professional development (CPD) - an in-service process for practicing teachers.



To view teaching as a highly-skilled practice, one that requires close training is to respect the professional demands of the work. However, the common resistance to the notion of detailed professional preparation, and even the need for training, stands in the way of improving teachers' preparation for the work of teaching. People come to teacher education with beliefs, values, commitments, personalities and moral codes from their upbringing and schooling. Helping would-be teacher examine critically their beliefs and values as they relate to teaching, learning and subject matter and form a vision of good teaching to guide and inspire their learning and their work is a central task of teacher education (Vedika, 2016).

### **3. Teacher Education: A Recipe for Socio-Economic and Political Emancipation of Nigeria**

The connection between education and development has been a subject of contemplation and discussion throughout history. Plato and Aristotle's thoughts on education and its relationship to the state have indeed influenced political philosophy for centuries. Their ideas suggest that the nature of education reflects the character and aspirations of a society and that the state's goals should be mirrored in its educational system (Akinsanya, 2004). The truism that education is the surest way to sustainably develop any people or society (socially, economically, and politically) needs no contention. Teacher education plays a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political liberation of individuals in any geopolitical space. One of its primary functions is to facilitate the development of attitudes, values, skills, and knowledge necessary for making informed decisions that benefit oneself and others, both in the present and in the future. Furthermore, it encourages individuals to translate these decisions into action, thereby fostering personal growth and societal progress.

Educational institutions play a leading role in building more sustainable societies and creating new paradigms as they have the mission to promote development and also bring about socio-economic and political emancipation through both teaching and research. However, it should be noted that these laudable objectives can be carried out only through teachers who have been trained on values and perspectives on socio-economic and political emancipation. Hence, teacher education could be aptly regarded as a crucial catalyst for advancing social, economic, and environmental values conducive to sustainable development within society (Johnson, 2007) and since societies are not static entities, as they undergo constant and rapid development and change, education becomes still more a condition of coping with reality.

One of the primary objectives of teacher education is to cultivate highly competent professional educators who are adaptable to the evolving needs of students and the progressive demands of contemporary society (Oyekan, 2006). Hence, a powerful strategy that any government can employ to advance a nation's development and liberate it from socio-economic and political challenges is to bolster the education of its educators, that is, teachers. This is crucial because a nation's prosperity and influence are intrinsically linked to the effective education of its populace and the presence of skilled individuals across all sectors of society.

Management of teacher education is a technical business. Generally, teacher education is inclusive, encompassing, and dynamic and requires diverse inputs. Efficient management of any of the programmes involved entails consideration of various things among which include but are not limited to: the administration of every stage of teacher education, the political and education philosophies, policy design and formulation for the programme, the teacher education curriculum, the historical facts concerning the development of and the trends in the teacher education programme and then investment in the programme (Nyerere, 2009). Without thorough education and pedagogical training focused on teaching advanced curricula, teachers risk sending a societal message that prioritises academic adequacy over excellence, potentially hindering students' aspirations for higher achievement (UNESCO, 1996, p. 37). Apart from this, it is supposed to focus on preparing and producing school teachers to confidently initiate and participate efficiently in modern development-related activities. This is the strategy the "Asian Tigers" exploited to promote and accelerate their national growth and development (Jung-Li, 2001).

The socio-economic and political emancipation of people in any nation is predicated on the adequate knowledge of the people in such a nation for "a mind that knows is a mind that is free" (an

aphorism contained in the last stanza of the University of Ibadan School Anthem). Hence, teacher education must assume special priority in the country's educational planning and development. This implies that a teacher who is highly trained and approved qualified and competent will be competent enough to transmit the knowledge and skills acquired to the learners. The learner (students) will in turn construct knowledge through their interpretive interaction with the experiences in their social environments create jobs for self-reliance instead of being a job seeker and thereby contribute to the growth and development of the nation's economy and also aid in alleviating poverty in the society as they employ other people to work with (Nyerere, 2009).

To harness teacher education as a tool for societal transformation amidst socio-economic and political challenges, it's crucial to develop alternative teacher education programmes. These programs should aim to bolster the availability of teachers in areas facing shortages, whether due to geographic factors or specific subject demands such as IT or languages. Nigeria has the flexibility to tailor these programmes to suit their particular requirements and the characteristics of the individuals they aim to attract to the teaching profession. This could involve adjusting entry requirements, certification methods for teachers, and the financing mechanisms involved. An inclusive approach enables the integration of these pathways with existing ones: conventional and alternative teacher training programs should be viewed not as rivals, but as supplements to each other. Similarly, establishing systematic teacher certification and accrediting teacher education institutions is essential.

Teacher education is in a constant state of evolution, responding to the dynamic nature of society. To ensure that teachers are well-equipped to tackle the challenges of our rapidly changing world, teacher education programmes must remain up-to-date with the latest developments and trends. The core of the entire teacher education process lies in its curriculum, encompassing its design, structure, organisation, instructional methods, and suitability to meet the needs of both students and society. The social and economic development of a nation is fundamentally an education process in which people learn to create new institutions, utilise new technologies, cope with their environment, and alter their patterns of behaviour. Education in a broad sense improves the capabilities of individuals and the capacity of institutions and becomes a catalyst for the closely interrelated economic, social, cultural, and demographic changes.

#### **4. Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria: Analysis of Issues and Probable Panaceas to the Identified Challenges**

Every educational institution in any geopolitical space (country) is established and saddled with the responsibility of not only transmitting knowledge to transform the economy and modernise the society but also building the human capacity needed for accelerated economic growth and development as well as influencing the diversification of the economy for the alleviation of poverty and improved standard of living of the people (Jaiyeoba, 2018; Adedjei, 2022). Over the years, teacher education in Nigeria has witnessed several challenges. Despite numerous recommendations and reforms intended to reposition teacher education in Nigeria for better performance, its challenges seem complex and multifaceted, much like the mythical Hydra with its many heads. Some of these challenges in teacher education arose due to shifts in socio-economic and political circumstances over time. Others developed because of governmental disregard for the education sector, particularly in terms of adapting to evolving realities such as Nigeria's expanding population and the increasing demand for education services and facilities. Some of these challenges and the suggested solutions to the identified problems are specifically examined as follows;

##### *4.1. System of Accreditation of Institutions of Higher Learning*

The accreditation system for teacher education programmes in Nigeria, across different institutions and faculties, is currently far from ideal. It is managed by various bodies that are often plagued by crises and hindered by administrative obstacles. Regrettably, the current system for accrediting faculties and institutions to offer teacher education programmes is disorganised and fails to meet satisfactory standards. There exists a plethora of disparate and unaligned entities and

institutions, including University Senates, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the National Universities Commission (NUC), as well as Federal and State Ministries of Education, facilitated through bodies like the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC), the National Council for Education, Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), and the Teachers Registration Council (TRC), which oversees a national registry and sets standards for educators (Eduwen and Osagie-Obazee, 2016). There is an urgent need to overhaul and reengineer the accreditation issue as far as teacher education is concerned.

#### *4.2. Poor Implementation of Education Policies*

Poor policy implementation indeed poses a significant challenge to the quality delivery of teacher education in Nigeria. When policies are not effectively implemented, it can lead to a lack of proper resources, inadequate training for teachers, and insufficient support systems, all of which contribute to poor quality education. This, in turn, results in low-performing graduates from teacher education institutions. However, several factors could be adduced as inhibitors to the smooth implementation of educational policies thereby resulting in poor quality delivery. Examples of these are government underfunding of education and injudicious utilisation of available funds by implementation agencies: vice-chancellors, rectors, provosts, deans of faculties, heads of departments, principals, etc.

#### *4.3. Issues of Internal Efficiency and Quality Assurance*

Candidates seeking admission to teacher education programs in Nigerian tertiary institutions often exhibit academic and emotional attributes that are pivotal for ensuring quality assurance and internal efficiency within the teaching profession. There is a noticeable pattern wherein individuals applying for teacher education programs are either those who have been unsuccessful in gaining admission to their preferred fields of study or lack the necessary qualifications for admission into highly sought-after professional courses such as medicine, law, engineering, and architecture. The typical lack of applicants vying for admission into programmes geared towards preparing them as educators in universities and colleges serve as an indication of why the admission and placement processes in education programmes are not as stringent as those in other programs mentioned earlier. This deviation from international standards for teacher selection is notable. For instance, the International Labor Organization (ILO) advocates for the selection of teachers based on their moral, intellectual, and physical attributes. In advanced countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, China, and others, candidates are required to demonstrate specific intellectual abilities and personal traits before being accepted for training (adapted from Lassa, 1998). In contrast, Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education prioritize students' admissions mainly on meeting the minimum academic standards, often neglecting other globally acknowledged criteria like emotional stability, physical fitness, moral integrity, and communication skills.

#### *4.4. Teachers' Recruitment and Training*

The recruitment process and subsequent training for individuals entering the teaching profession lack seriousness and long-term vision. This has led to a situation where even school dropouts can become teachers, diminishing the value and prestige of the profession and turning it into a last resort for those who have struggled in other career paths. The quality and quantity of a nation's teaching force play a crucial role in the successful execution of its educational policies. It is essential to prevent individuals lacking competence from entering this esteemed profession. Therefore, governments should exclusively recruit trained and qualified teachers into the educational system to uphold its integrity and effectiveness.

#### *4.5. Poor Funding*

Teacher education faces significant challenges due to insufficient funding from all levels of government. Consequently, there is a lack of essential teaching and learning resources, outdated

textbooks, deteriorating school infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequately equipped facilities, including a shortage of advanced Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems. It is disheartening to acknowledge that the Nigerian government allocates less than the presumed 26% of its national budget to education, falling significantly below the standard recommended by UNESCO. Consequently, there are concerns regarding the quality of graduates produced by the education system.

#### *4.6. Professionalisation of Teaching*

The need for the professionalisation of teaching has become imperative given the advent of new technology and knowledge explosion that demands better-trained teachers at the various levels of the educational sector. Essentially, professionalism should be seen as the ability of the practitioners of an occupation to enforce its rules and regulations in terms of autonomy and prestige, ethics, work conditions, admission into the field, training, certification, and registration. Unfortunately, teaching in Nigeria is yet to be fully accorded full recognition as a profession because it has no direct and systematic control status, poor remuneration of teachers, and lack of political will on the part of the teachers' registration council to enforce its code of ethics and standards. Numerous teachers in Nigeria do not meet the minimum international standards. This is largely due to the retention of a significant number of untrained and inadequately skilled personnel within the system, resulting in a lack of professionalisation in the teaching career. Many unqualified teachers are still employed by some State Teaching Service Boards, and a considerable portion of higher education lecturers have yet to undergo training in the faculty of education training. Unless the government mandates this training and actively implements the policy, teaching will remain accessible to anyone, posing a risk of further undermining professionalism within the teaching profession.

#### *4.7. Ineffective and Inefficient Organisation Teaching Practice*

The importance of teaching practice within teacher education programs cannot be overemphasised. However, many Nigerian higher education institutions lack a focus on effectively organising teaching practices. There exists a significant disparity in the duration of teaching practice among these institutions, with some offering it for an entire term, others for six weeks, and some for even less than six weeks. These variations have notable implications for the standard and, consequently, the quality of teacher education across the country. Furthermore, teaching practice supervision is vulnerable to various biases. For example, certain assessment tools used in teaching practice are subjective and can be interpreted differently depending on the supervisor's background, training, and personal inclinations.

#### *4.8. Lack and Insufficient Knowledge in the Use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)*

Another significant challenge facing teacher education in Nigeria is the lack and inadequate knowledge and utilisation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in an increasingly globalised world. Proficiency in computer technology and internet usage is essential for all educators to ensure the relevance of the educational system and its outcomes in the 21st century. Unfortunately, many schools in Nigeria continue to adhere to traditional educational methods with minimal or no integration of ICT. Numerous schools in Nigeria persist in employing traditional educational approaches, often without incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT). To harness the abundance of information and foster communication within professional networks, teachers require continuous training and access to ICT resources. The government must provide facilities that enable teachers and students to access these technologies without interruption, particularly as the world continues to evolve into a global village. As Osokoya (2012) contends, for prospective educators to function effectively and adapt to the demands of modern times, they must embrace new technologies and methodologies.



## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013), the primary aim of teacher education is to equip teachers with the necessary intellectual and professional foundation for their roles. Despite the commendable objectives and attempts by successive Nigerian government administrations to enhance the system, teacher education programmes in Nigerian institutions of higher learning often lack quality and fail to meet international standards. Achieving national development, including socio-economic and political advancement, as well as diversification of Nigeria's economy, necessitates prioritising investment in human capital through teacher education. The Nigerian educational system must be adaptable to the technological, social, and economic demands of society, aiming to produce the human resources required for industrial and economic sectors. The fulfillment of organised education's potential as a potent tool for change and national development predominantly relies on the capabilities of teachers.

Based on a thorough assessment of the current situation, the following recommendations are put forward: i. The government must ensure the timely payment of teachers' salaries, and allowances, and promote them as per their due. ii. Regular workshops and seminars should be organised for teachers across various subjects at least once per term to foster their professional growth and development. iii. Rigorous supervision of teachers is necessary to guarantee the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. iv. The government should prioritize the recruitment of qualified teachers, while identifying and removing unqualified or incompetent individuals, including quack teachers, from the education system. In addition, there is a pressing need to develop educational programmes tailored for experienced or "old" teachers, aimed at equipping them with new skills, attitudes, and values necessary for societal integration and knowledge enhancement. Indeed, the formal educational system, particularly through teacher education, serves as a vital institutional mechanism for fostering human skills and knowledge development

Given that the success of any training programme in the education sector relies heavily on competent teachers to administer it, teacher education rightfully warrants the highest priority in the training and education of teachers. It is not an exaggeration to assert that by professionalising teaching and prioritising teacher education as the focal point of socio-economic and political advancement in Nigeria, there are tendencies that teachers' productivity would be enhanced, mitigation of systemic issues in the educational sector would be attained, ensuring of effective service delivery would be attained while the involvement of other sectors of society (in contributing to economic diversification), and positioning education as the paramount instrument for national development could be ensured without further ado.

In the final analysis, there is a pressing need to overhaul the current structure of the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) to make it more proactive in upholding the code of ethics and standards of the teaching profession. Such a reorganisation would help prevent education from becoming a default option for candidates who see teaching as their last resort.

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