

## **THE ROLE OF PRIMARY/SECONDARY TEACHER EDUCATION IN ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Education is and remains the greatest legacy bequeathed to today's generation. it is a well known and undoubted fact that "no nation can rise above its educational system and no educational system can rise above its teachers" (N.P.E, 2007, p. 34). This is because teachers are the waters that nourish any meaningful development in a society/nation. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to unravel the immense contribution of primary and secondary teacher education in the achievement of the millennium development goals in Nigeria. The paper also highlights some of the critical challenges of teacher education in Nigeria and suggests ways of overcoming these challenges as the way forward.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is undisputedly the life-wire of any meaningful development. The Nigerian Policy on Education (NPE, 2007) states the need for functional education, to be relevant, practical and to acquire the relevant skills and the development competences for the individuals to live in and contribute reasonably to the development of the society. This means that the quality of instruction at all levels has to be channeled towards instilling the core values of competence necessary for self-reliance and poverty reduction. It is in line with this that Daily Sun (2008) was prompted to assert that: "today, more than ever before in human history, the wealth or poverty of nations depend on the quality of higher education. Those with a repertoire of skills and a greater capacity for learning cannot but look forward to lifetimes of unprecedented economic fulfillment. Besides the noble roles of teachers in the society, the teaching profession is not given the priority it deserves in the career choice of many educated job seekers in Nigeria. This is consequent of the poor remuneration and dehumanizing working conditions. Many who find themselves in the teaching profession often consider it a temporal detour. In Nigeria, a lot of political office holders were formally teachers or lecturers, but because of the poor and inadequate take-home-pay and the poor and or demeaning social outlook of the teaching profession, many have abandoned the calling to search for greener pastures. One of the consequences of this on teacher education is brain drain and falling academic standard. Thus, Ukeje (2000) remarked that:

"The ivory towers have become anthills of degradation. The school leaving certificate, the degree and diplomas have virtually lost their credibility both within and outside Nigeria. Such a tragedy. These scenarios cast ominous clouds on the future of the Nigerian nation and urgent actions are needed to salvage the situation before it is too late. Education can help and teacher education could be the panacea."

From the forgoing, education can be seen as the acquisition of knowledge, skill and values of the society by individuals to enable them contribute adequately to the development of the society in which they live. It therefore follows that education not only allows the individual his quota towards the achievement and advancement of societal goals and objectives, but also develops his thinking capacity to solve his problems by making rational decisions pertaining to it. Therefore, the essence of education is to elicit positive changes in the behavioural pattern of the individual learner.

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### **The Concept of Primary and Secondary Education in Nigeria**

Primary education, as referred to in the National Policy on Education (2007), is the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the bedrock to the success or failure of the whole system.

The goals of primary education are to:

- Inculcate permanent literacy and innumeracy, and ability to communicate effectively;
- Lay a sound basic education for standard scientific and reflective thinking;
- Give citizens education as a basis for effective participation in and contribute to the life of the society;
- Mould the character and develop sound attitudes and morals in the child;
- Develop in the child the ability to accept to the child's changing environment;
- Give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skill that will enable him function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; and
- Provide the child with basic tools for further education advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the local society.

To achieve the above goals, the curriculum for primary schools must include the language of the immediate environment, English, French, Mathematics, Science, Physical and Health Education (PHE), Religious Knowledge, Agricultural Science/Home Economics, Social studies/citizenship education, drawing, handcraft, music and cultural activities.

Some of the educational services to be provided in primary schools include school library, basic health scheme, counseling, educational resource centre, specialist teachers for mathematics, physical education and languages, fine arts and home economics, etc. However, some of these services do not exist at all in the primary schools, such as guidance counseling unit. Facilities are not adequate; many students are sitting on bare floors in the classrooms and some are having their lesson under shades of trees, especially in rural areas.

Secondary school education in Nigeria sets off immediately after primary school (age 11-17). Some of the early expectations of Nigerians about the erstwhile secondary education (6-3-3-4) that it was going to open up a window in the educational development of Nigeria have now failed. Consequently, the 9-3-4 educational system has now been adopted. Consequent to its launch at the start of the millennium, it has generated a lot of research.

Secondary education in Nigeria, according to Yusuf (2005, 2010) has failed to sufficiently address the psychomotor and affective learning domains and or outcomes. Thus, our secondary schools have produced a lot of graduates who know so much but cannot do much technical works. She observed that there are very few exciting structures for ensuring high educational standards in terms of council or commission for monitoring and control of teaching and learning.

Like the primary schools, the secondary school offers additional subjects such as the advanced sciences – chemistry, physics biology. Others are Geography/literature in English, among others. It is bad enough that students' evaluation at the secondary school level is entirely on cognitive domain which specifies subjects for public examinations such as, WAEC are NECO. Unfortunately, results of these examinations are abysmally poor especially in English language, mathematics and the sciences. Often times, the populace blame this ugly trend on the poor quality of teaching and teaching conditions, uninspiring teaching, the difficulty of students' prosperity at rote learning, large classes, and students inability to comply with examination ethics. All these have continually plagued the success of secondary education in Nigeria.

According to Engels (2010) The goals of Millennium Development Goals are relevant in the overall achievement or development of literacy/education. These goals especially the ones that are specific to this paper include:

- The eradication of extreme hunger/poverty
- to achieve universal primary school education
- to find new ways of empower girl-child/women
- to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases that plague Africa and to develop a global partnership for development among others.

### **The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

In September 2000, Heads of State of different countries (number 156), gathered at the millennium summit, as part of the 55<sup>th</sup> United Nations (UN) General Assembly which was denoted as millennium assembly, and issued a "Millennium declaration" (UN 2005). These declaration were built on UN universal declaration of Human rights, the eight (8) millennium goals set by the leader were given a time bound up to 2015 with particular target of achieving the goals.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are listed below:

- Reduction of poverty and extreme hunger
- Universal basic education
- Promote Gender equality and empower women
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal health
- Combat HIV/AIDS malaria and other diseases
- Ensure environmental sustainability
- Develop a global partnership for development

According to Jibril Ibrahim (CDD Abuja) the goals above are expected to be fully achieved in year 2015. But the attempt for the achievement have never come up to fifty percent (50%) in the nine years and what is the probability of achieving the goals in the next six years. It is assumed that the progress of MDGs programmes in Nigeria will influence Education through development. World Bank (2005) Nigeria being the most populous sub-Saharan country with abundant natural endowment ironically it is among the poorest nations.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Nigeria country office (2006) (UN) report, 54.4 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line. On school enrolment, adult literacy rate, food in takes, access to water, infant and maternal mortality rates and other social indicators point equally dismay picture, all pointing to the enormity of the task of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Nigeria. In pursuance to combat these problems the government initiated a number of policies which includes NEEDs, SEEDs, LEEDs, at federal, state, and local levels in line with MDGs programmes. We are of the view that education is crucial in Nigeria for the achievement of all national development programmes in Nigeria. It is essential for Nigeria to appraise the MDGs programme especially with regards to teacher education in order to achieve high level of economic growth and make sustainable development a reality.

### **The Role of Teacher Education in Achieving Millennium Development Goals**

Quality teacher education programmes produce competent teachers for the educational system which could enhance the attainment of MDGs in various ways. It is obvious that the attainment of the universal primary education component of the MDGs initiative depends on the availability of teachers in sufficient numbers and of sufficient quality to complete the task. For the universal primary education to have the intended impact on the learners their teachers must be capable of imparting permanent literacy and numeracy and some useful communication and life skills to them. Such teachers cannot accomplish these goals without undergoing relevant teacher education programmes of good quality.

Other possible contributions of viable teacher education programmes to the achievement of MDGs include providing teacher education institutions with appropriate courses in citizenship or civic education, and education for sustainable development. Useful life skills such as healthy living to reduce incidences of disease and the risk of HIV/AIDS, decision-making and planning for the future including marriage, relevant aspects of adult education, and, among other things, enlightening mothers about childcare and family planning for improving maternal health and reducing mortality. Adequately exposing the right teachers to such courses under competent trainers will equip them with relevant knowledge and skills, which they can transmit to children and even adults with whom they interact and thereby increase the prospects of not only meeting the goals of UBE and also MDGs. It may appear difficult or even unreasonable to add all these courses to a teacher education programme in which students are already carrying full loads. This problem may be resolved by adding to the list of exiting electives and appropriately guiding student teachers into registering for them.

Although the relevant government of Nigeria believes that no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers; quality is rarely an issue either in the recruitment of teacher candidates or in their training.

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(Federal Government of Nigeria, 2007). It is common knowledge in Nigeria that candidates for teachers are usually perceived as the generally academically weak students who do not aspire for prestigious profession. The specific roles of teacher education as fashioned in consonance with the objective of teacher education as contained in the National Policy on Education (2007) are to:

- produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system.
- encourage further the spirit of enquiring and creating in teachers.
- help teachers to fit into 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 make them adequately adapt to changing situations.
- enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

From the above roles of teacher education, it can be deduced that higher standards in the educational system will only be possible where the teaching-learning activities are adequate. There must be good infrastructure, adequate facilities and qualified staff in order to ensure that the products are academically and morally sound.

### Effect of Poor Remuneration on Teachers' Motivation

In a bid to assess the effect of poor remuneration on teachers' motivation/teacher education, the following responses were elicited:

Table 1: An Assessment of Teachers' Motivation

S/N	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Others
1	Teacher' remuneration is poor	89 %	8 %	3 %
2	Teachers' salaries are irregular	93 %	6 %	1 %
3	Teachers' status is low	93 %	4 %	3 %
4	No compensation for teachers	86 %	10 %	4 %
5	Teachers' output/input is dependent on their motivation	75 %	8 %	7 %

From the table above, it could be deduced that a greater percentage of respondents agree that when teachers are inadequately motivated, it affects the overall result of educational objective and outcomes.

### Effect of Lack of Qualification on the Achievement of Educational Aims & the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS)

Table II: Teacher's Qualification

S/N	Statements/responses	Agree	Disagree	Others
1	Graduates without teaching qualifications are given teaching jobs	87 %	10 %	3 %
2	Unqualified teacher educators are found in Colleges of Education or other teacher education institutions as lectures	78 %	9 %	3 %
3	NYSC members without teaching qualifications are deployed to schools	90 %	6 %	4 %
4	Unqualified teachers are made heads in schools	89 %	8 %	3 %

From the above assessment, it was observed that 87% agreed that graduates without teaching qualifications are given teaching jobs; 78% of unqualified teachers are found in teacher education institutions while 90% of NYSC members without teaching qualification are deployed to teach in schools. Another 89% of unqualified teachers are made head teachers in private schools.

### Teacher Education and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): The Journey So Far

The products of teacher education programmes in Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education are bound to be of low quality as the three major factors that determine quality (i.e the process of selecting teacher education candidates, the programme of study during the training of student teachers, and the

institutional factors which include staffing, physical facilities, and funding) do not work in favour of academic excellence in most Nigerian teacher education institutions (Oyetunde 2010). Quality in this respect refers to the steps taken by higher education institutions responsible for producing teachers to make sure that they are able to perform their jobs or render their services effectively. In other words, the steps they take to ensure that they produce “quality teachers” who meet the certification requirements (Ibidapo – Obe, 2007). If teachers are not able to teach primary school pupils well, as is presently the case with many “qualified” Nigerian primary and secondary school teachers or, if they are not able to impart useful skills to them primary education will be an illusion.

This and other education related MDGs can hardly be achieved if there is no change in the present approach to the recruitment and training of teacher education candidates. In order to produce teachers that are capable of making a difference to their students’ academic performance, thereby contributing towards achieving both the country’s objectives of basic education and the MDG of universal primary education, attention should be turned from a concern about having sufficient numbers of teachers to concern about the quality teachers. Therefore, there is the need for a break with business as usual with regards to teacher education in Nigeria.

### **Some Implication or Challenges for Quality Teacher Education in Nigeria**

Having a break with business as usual implies, that higher education institutions that are responsible for the production of the nation’s teachers have to pay more attention to quality assurance. Teacher education candidates should not be the academically weak students or the rejects from other academic programmes. Producing weak academic background is not what the nation requires to meet the goals of universal primary education. Such teachers may not be able to adequately impart the system. In other words, doing more of the same thing or producing more teachers or the same quality as the ones referred to above, will not lead to improvement in the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and other life skills by pupils who go through the universal basic education in the country. Having a break with business as usual implies that only the candidates who genuinely meet the admission requirement for teacher education should be offered admission into the nation’s tertiary institutions for teacher education.

In addition to selecting only qualified candidates, higher education institutions should design appropriate course and programme aimed at equipping the teacher candidates with appropriate skills that will enable them not only to effectively impart literacy, numeracy, communication and other life skills, but they should also expose them to the techniques of teaching adults. This will enable them participate effectively in adult education classes where they would have opportunities of teaching adults alike. In order to enhance the quality of teacher education programmes, higher education institutions should in their recruitment processes ensure that only appropriately qualified educators teach students teachers. Step should be taken to ensure that student teachers actually benefit from teaching practice exercises. A true partnership approach to the exercise should be adopted with grater collaboration between teacher education institutions and their placement schools and those of the students teachers’ lecturers should be clearly defined to each party and the former made to play more active roles in teaching students teachers how to teach instead of virtually abandoning their classrooms for students teachers.

It is likely that adhering to quality and high standards in the education of future teachers may lead to Nigeria falling short of the number of teachers required for achieving universal basic education by the year 2015, but it may be better to have relatively few and effective teachers than to have very many ineffective ones. Ensuring quality in the achievement of universal primary education in the country but achieving these objectives latter is better than not achieving them. In fact, it has already been observed in the Millennium Development Goal Report of 2005 that it is unlikely that the country will be able to meet most of the goals by 2015 (United Nations, 2005).

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Scheme adopted in Nigeria is an effective strategy for achieving universal primary education of expected quality only to the extent that serious efforts are made by educational administrators and teacher education institutions to produce quality teachers. It may be better to achieve this and other education related goals at a later date than to have poor graduates of teacher education programmes who may have nothing worth-learning by their pupils.

### **CONCLUSION**

Making the Millennium Development Goals Happen through:  
Qualitative Teacher Education in Nigeria

## **The Role of Primary/Secondary Teacher Education in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Nigeria**

Education is key to the socio-economic development of a nation. There is therefore the need for the policy to harness all available resources in achieving the MDG2. (Universal Primary Education). A good education is a key route out of poverty. Education creates a more level playing field for children and improves their life chances especially those with disabilities or those living in disaster prone or remote areas.

Great strides have been made towards MDG2 – Universal Primary Education (UPE) but practical measures have to be taken swiftly if we are to succeed.

In Nigeria, especially in Northern Nigeria, girls are still fewer than the boys in the classroom, beside the harsh reality that failure to educate girls has real and stark consequences. But with a reliable teacher education, girls, as their male counterparts will be encouraged to go to school to gain assets and life skills necessary to have and improved life, which is education's utmost goal.

Making the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) happen is the clarion call made some 10 years ago, when world leaders affirmed the importance of primary education for a country's development, thus, they agreed to push for universal access by 2015. Progress towards this ambitious target has been impressive despite the many challenges posed by conflict and financial calamities among others. Of all the countries (including Nigeria) striving towards this achievement, many are now more than two-third towards reaching the so-called Millennium Development Goals: achieve Universal Primary Education. But many, (Nigeria inclusive) are still struggling and 2015 is just ahead.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The focus and process of education, as Ibidapo-Obe (2007) noted is too mechanistic using the lecture method which do not promote or encourage entrepreneurial.

It is recommended that the universities degree programmes in education should tally with the duration of the other professions such as law, medicine, architecture and engineering. Though the extension of the period for acquiring degrees in education in our universities, the dichotomy prevailing in the concurrent and consecutive degree programmes could be remedied.

If quality educational standards are to be attained, sustained and improved in teacher education, then teacher education programmes should be competency-based. A number of top Nigerian academic educationists consider that the present teacher education programmes could be described as experience based (Baikie, 2002; Ukeje, 2000; Obanya, 2002-2004; IVowi, 2000; Azeke, 2000 cited in Oyetunde 2010).

However, the students' experience might be superficial, trivial and transitory. It is often geared primarily around the need to obtain a certificate, while experience could all but be forgotten as soon as the certificate is obtained.

This contrasts sharply with what obtains in competency-based teacher education programmes. Three criteria have to be met in our attempts at determining appreciable educational standards of competency-based teacher educational programmes in Nigeria.

We need to devise strategies for the production of effective and qualified teachers at all levels of education. We need capable, dedicated, competent and efficient teachers at all levels of education in this country. Such qualities are essential in teachers if we are to attain and improve educational standards at all levels of education in this country, which will enhance the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

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