

Teacher Education for Sustainable Development In Nigeria

ORGA Fidel Sewuese

Department of General Studies Education

Federal College of Education Odugbo, Benue State

Phone no: 08160619440

E-mail address: orgasewuase@gmail.com

Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges worldwide. They are designed to guide global efforts to achieve sustainable development by 2030 and provide a shared blueprint for governments, organizations, and individuals to work together toward a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future. Education plays a very important role in the progress and societal development of any nation. It is an indispensable component of human life, and the Indian Constitution recognizes this fact by making education a shared responsibility of the national and state governments, highlighting the significance of high-quality education. The teacher is an important part in the educational system. Teachers and institutions are instruments in imparting education, a potent tool for shaping future generations. A well-educated and trained teacher knows his duties very well and he accepts this responsibility with ease. Education often referred to as the backbone of society, by which advancements are made in a variety of fields, including technology, business, economics, peace, social justice, and human rights. The success of these developments depends on an educated population. This paper explores the challenges of teachers for sustainable development in Nigeria. The paper also recommends that in view of the invaluable role of teachers in the life of any nation, the government should increase the funding of teacher education sector by devoting a minimum of 30% of its annual budget on the training and professional development of teachers through in-service training, seminars, conferences, workshops on ICT programs and provision of infrastructural facilities.

Keywords: Challenges, Teachers, Sustainable Development, Education and Teachers

Introduction

Teacher education plays a vital role in shaping the quality of education and the overall development of a nation. In Nigeria, the need to enhance the standard of teacher education has become increasingly crucial due to its impact on educational outcomes and national development (Salih & Mohammed, 2023). Teachers are expected to be the pillars of educational development in all countries all over the world. In fact, no nation can boast of a strong and effective educational system without continuous development of its teachers. To ensure sustainable education in Nigeria, therefore, management should refocus on retraining serving teachers in our schools. This can only be achieved through continuous teacher development programmes. It is, therefore, necessary that teacher development plans should focus on what the teacher needs in terms of skills and knowledge that would help the school in achieving stated objectives. Teaching demands a continuous development of knowledge and ability. This is because primarily, education is rapidly changing and this requires regular efforts on teachers

to keep with global best practices. A dedicated teacher has little or no time to rest on his oars, ; if he does, he will go down the stream. A good teacher considers how he will broaden his knowledge and widen his experience after graduation (Olufunbi & Junior, 2020).

Barth (1990) is of the opinion that nothing in a school has more impact on students in terms of skill development, self-competence, or classroom behaviour, than the personal and professional growth of the teachers. Okorie (1999) opined that irrespective of a worker's degree of pre-service training, knowledge, ability and skills in order to stay up with the quickly evolving social landscape, one should therefore not be satisfied with just being a trained teacher. For one to excel the teaching profession, the profession demands that one must continue to update one's knowledge in order to cope with the problems of education as they manifest. Teachers are expected to improve on their skills by making use of the numerous professional avenues opened to them. For instance, there are many colleges and institutions that offer part-term courses in education. There are a number of vacation courses organized by the universities and colleges of education, which lead to certification in education.

The provision of adequate training and regular retraining of teachers is one of the basic tools in the effective implementation of educational policies. Professional training is very important, but it is just one of several necessities required to make the teacher effective and efficient in the education process. A good professional training without the support of functional and up-to-date instructional resources; a conducive work environment; regular supply of relevant information; and competence in the language of instruction might render the best professional teachers ineffective in the instruction process. The reformation of any education system therefore requires a holistic approach to the development of the teaching process. This will make the professional training of teachers more meaningful in effecting the realization of education policies (Olufunbi & Junior, 2020).

Accelerating changes in life-supporting Earth systems such as climate change and growing social disparities are putting the world as we know it under pressure (Fischer, et al., 2022). Students around the globe, grappling with these complex challenges, have begun to take action by walking out of school and confronting the collective inability of decision-makers to implement necessary sustainability transformations (Boulianne et al., 2020). As interconnected issues that undermine socio-environmental stability continue to emerge and evolve, education will need to respond to a rapidly changing world. In meeting this challenge, teacher education is a key arena for shaping progress toward more sustainable futures (United Nations [UN], 2020). Education and education for sustainable development (ESD) in particular, plays a central role in building society's capacity to address some of the most pressing societal challenges faced today (Fischer, et al., 2022). This crucial role is reflected in the commitment of the international community to the Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promote lifelong learning opportunities" (UN, 2015, p. 14). ESD seeks to support learners through the development of competencies for sustainability problem-solving and enables them to participate in sustainable development while critically reflecting on their own actions (Brundiers et al., 2021; Rieckmann, 2018; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017).

Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is an organized programme designed for the professional training of those who engaged in the art and science of teaching. Nnokam and Sule (2017) opines that teacher education is the professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge that will make them efficient and effective in their work, in accordance with the needs of the society at any point in time. It includes training/education of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on the job). Also, teacher education can be defined as the policies and procedures designed to equip prospective teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom and the wider society. According to Nnokam and Sule (2017), teacher education is therefore a formal programme designed to produce academically qualified and competent corps of

personnel who will continue the process of transmitting worthwhile knowledge to the present generation through the different levels of the school system. This is aptly articulated by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in the National Policy of Education when the goals of teacher education were stated as follows:

- i. To produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;
- ii. To encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- iii. To help teachers to fit into the social life of the community, and society at large and to enhance their commitment of national goals;
- iv. To provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and to make them adaptable to any changing situation not only in the life of their country, but in the wider world; and
- v. To enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Concept of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The history of the SDGs can be traced to 1972 when governments met in Stockholm, Sweden, for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, to consider the rights of the human family to a healthy and productive environment. It was not until 1983 that the United Nations decided to create the World Commission on Environment and Development which defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Nnokam &Sule, 2017). In 1992 the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio. It was here that the first agenda for Environment and Development was developed and adopted, also known as Agenda 21(Nnokam &Sule, 2017).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of seventeen inspirational "Global Goals" with 169 targets between them. Spearheaded by the United Nations, through a deliberative process involving its 194 Member States, as well as global civil society, the goals are contained in paragraph 54 United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1 of 25 September 2015. The Official Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted on 25 September 2015 has 92 paragraphs, with the main paragraph (51) outlining the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and its associated 169 targets (Nnokam and Sule, 2017). These included the following goals:

- i. **No Poverty** - End poverty in all its forms everywhere: Poverty is more than lack of income or resources- it includes lack of basic services, such as education, hunger, social discrimination and exclusion, and lack of participation in decision making;
- ii. **Zero Hunger** - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Agriculture is the single largest employer in the world, providing livelihoods for 40 per cent of today's global population. It is the largest source of income and jobs for poor rural households. Women comprise on average 43 per cent of the agricultural labor force in developing countries, and over 50 per cent in parts of Asia and Africa, yet they only own 20% of the land;
- iii. **Good Health and Well-being** - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. An important target is to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from pollution-related diseases;
- iv. **Quality Education** - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Major progress has been made for education access, specifically at the primary school level, for both boys and girls. However, access does not always mean quality of education, or completion of primary school. Currently, 103 million youth worldwide still lack basic literacy skills and more than 60 per cent of them are women;
- v. **Gender Equality** - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and

- representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large;
- vi. **Clean Water and Sanitation** - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
 - vii. **Affordable and Clean Energy** - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all;
 - viii. **Decent Work and Economic Growth** - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;
 - ix. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure** - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation;
 - x. **Reduced Inequalities** - Reduce income inequality within and among countries;
 - xi. **Sustainable Cities and Communities** - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and
 - xii. **Responsible Consumption and Production** - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Teacher Education for Sustainable Development

The word “education” can be traced to its Latin root “educere” meaning “to lead a person out” (Omotoso, 2010). Plato maintained that the essence of education is to lead a person from the dark cave of ignorance into the limelight of knowledge by turning the eyes of the soul from darkness to light. This implies that freedom should be the end product of education (Omotoso, 2010). Education should emphasize the ability of the learner to recognize problems and attempt solution to such problems with little or no assistance (Omotoso, 2010). Consequently, Wei Bo (2009:2) posits that ‘on the one hand, one needs to get into the world of civilization through learning knowledge, skills and social rules; on the other hand, the learner also needs to break out from its bias and ignorance, especially transcend itself, and these two steps make up a full circulation of education’. Thus, in Wei Bo’s view, the environment is a major contributor to learning. However, the learner must also possess the skills that enable him or her to make rational judgments in the society. It is sad that Western education as passed on to Africa disrupted the perception of Africans about their environment: having obtained some sort of emancipation into the world of (Western) civilization through the so called formal education, yet, he or she is still unfit to make meaningful contributions to the immediate community. This incapacity is evident in the underdevelopment of African nations (Omotoso, 2010).

Relevance of Teacher Education for Sustainable Development

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges worldwide. They are designed to guide global efforts to achieve sustainable development by 2030 and provide a shared blueprint for governments, organizations, and individuals to work together toward a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future. Education plays a very important role in the progress and societal development of any nation. It is an indispensable component of human life, and the Indian Constitution recognizes this fact by making education a shared responsibility of the national and state governments, highlighting the significance of high-quality education. The teacher is an important part in the educational system. Teachers and institutions are instruments in imparting education, a potent tool for shaping future generations. A well educated and trained teacher knows his duties very well and he accepts this responsibility with ease. Education often referred to as the backbone of society, by which advancements are made in a variety of fields, including technology, business, economics, peace, social justice, and human rights. The success of these developments depends on an educated population. This paper explores the pivotal role of teachers and educational institutions in advancing the SDGs, emphasizing the importance of education as a catalyst for positive change on a global scale.

Teacher education is an indispensable key to sustainable development. For sustainable development to be attained there is need to give priority to investment in human capital through quality teacher education (Nnokam & Sule, 2017). If people are educated in the real sense of it,

they would not wait for government to provide them with jobs, they will engage themselves in profitable ventures (economic emancipation) thereby enhancing the development of their milieu by liberating themselves from the grip of poverty and unemployment. As a matter of fact, the vital institutional mechanism for developing human skills and knowledge is the formal educational system via teacher education. The services of a teacher towards modernization and sustainable development cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore clear that no professional and adequate training of manpower for the education sector can be successful without competent teachers to handle the training programme (Nnokam & Sule, 2017). Hence, teacher education deserves the highest priority in the training and education of teachers. No wonder, Eduwen (1997) asserted that teachers are the essential elements recognized by the society to be in charge of the art and science of training manpower for the teaching profession and education is the mainstay of human capital development. No doubts, no national transformation can take place without an obvious human capital agenda. And, obviously, human capital development is a function of education at all levels. Education, itself can only be human capital development oriented if it is functional, qualitative and knowledge-economy driven, a delivery that can only be done by teachers produced from a dynamic and innovative teacher education system.

This scholar asserted further that of all instruments or approaches to national development and transformation, functional and quality education remains the most potent tool, but the system must be subject to reforms and repositioning as static education systems do not transform societies. Herein, education can only be re-worked and utilized for national development if teacher education can only be re-worked and utilized for national development if teacher education is equally re-planned and up-scaled to serve the purpose. The mistake often made is to see interventions in the education sector as directly capable of enhancing quality and functionality without the equally required competent teachers to drive the input process for desired outcomes and outputs. In Nigeria today, teacher education has to be refocused in several respects to be of utility value to National Development Transformation. The importance of teachers to sustainable development through poverty reduction and employment opportunities and employment opportunities is acknowledged worldwide. As a matter of fact, everyone agrees that second only to the students, the teacher is the heart of the education process and the main determinant of the quality and effectiveness of its results. The supply of good teachers is the bottle-neck of improvement (Nnokam & Sule, 2017).

Challenges of Teacher Education in Nigeria

Over the years, teacher education in Nigeria has witnessed tremendous challenges resulting from socio-economic, political and technological advancements in the Nigeria depressed economy. These challenges according to Nnokam and Sule (2017) include the following:

Intake and Appraisal of Students

The criteria for the recruitment and appraisal of students into teacher institutions have been a matter of controversy all over the country. It is the contention in many quarters that it is the less competent students who choose teaching as a career. It has also been said that it is only by a process of elimination that the students select teacher education as the form of higher education they or she will pursue. In Nigeria today, there is an oversupply of aspiring teachers for most subject areas, the exception being the sciences and technical disciplines. Therefore, the way to ensure quality control and professionalism is to evaluate and assess the individual qualities or intake characteristics of students as well as to focus the programmes on the abilities of students which are valued by those who eventually employ these teachers.

The Quality of Teacher Education Programme

In Nigeria today, the quality of teacher education is very much in doubt. Teacher education programmes have not been innovative in relation to instructional methods. Obsolete textbooks and teaching methods are still very much in vogue.

The curriculum practices are theory oriented rather than actual practice in the world of work. In addition, the quality of the programmes is also largely determined by those who teach

the teachers. It is a matter of regret and lamentation that most teacher educators cannot be described as professional teachers since they possess degree such as B.A. (Hons), B.Sc. (Hons), etc. in single subject discipline without educational background. The implication of this for teacher education is decline in academic standards. Quality assurance can be described as planned and systematic programmes designed to ensure that quality is maintained or improved. In Nigeria, teacher education has no well-defined systems of assessing its quality and evaluating its outcomes.

Teaching Practice

Teaching practice refers to the supervised, practical experience that student teachers gain in a real classroom setting as part of their teacher training program. It allows them to apply theoretical knowledge and develop practical skills under the guidance of experienced teachers. This hands-on experience helps student teachers gain confidence, refine their teaching methods, and assess their suitability for the teaching profession (Soninen & Merisuo-Storm, 2015).

Teaching practice is a vital component of teacher education programme. Unfortunately, little attention is devoted to the effective organization of teaching practice in our teacher colleges. There is indeed a wide variation in the amount of time that students spend on teaching practice. Some institutions organize teaching practice for a whole term, some in six weeks and some in a whole year. These consequential differences affect standard and invariably quality of teacher education in the Nigeria. Teaching practice supervision also is susceptible to numerous biasing factors. In the first place, some teaching practice assessment instruments are subjective and interpreted in various ways depending on the supervisor's orientation, training and disposition

In-Service Education

Whatever administrative arrangements or curricular proposals are made, change in the educational system ultimately depends on teachers. As a matter of policy, this requires the handwork of well-trained and dedicated teachers in Nigeria school system who are agents of civilization and teachers of the nation. Therefore, improving the quality of teachers and establishing innovations in education are the rationale behind in-service education to the fast development of Nigeria economy.

System of Institution Accreditation

The system of accreditation of teacher education programmes in Nigeria at the various institutions and faculties leaves much to be desired. They are in the hands of diverse bodies that are crisis ridden and bedeviled by administrative bottlenecks. As a matter of fact, it is sad to note our present system of accreditation of faculties and institutions for the running of teacher education programmes is haphazard and unsatisfactory. There are too many uncoordinated and uncooperative agencies and authorities involved such as University Senates, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), the

National Universities Commission (NUC), Federal and State Ministries of Education through such bodies as the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCC); the National Council for

Education Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE); the Teachers Registration Council (TRC) that maintains a national register and code of conduct for teachers.

Poor Funding

Teacher education is bedeviled by poor funding from all levels of government. This has resulted in the inadequate provision of teaching and learning materials, obsolete textbooks, dilapidated school buildings, overcrowded classes and ill-equipped classrooms lacking in sophisticated Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems. In fact, it is sad to note that the Nigeria Government devotes less than 26% of her national budget to education that is far below the standard prescribed by UNESCO (United Nations, 2015). As a result, the quality of products from this system is in doubt.

Professionalization of Teaching

The need for professionalization of teaching has become imperative in view of the advent of new technology and knowledge explosion that demands better trained teachers at the various levels of our 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 the autonomy and prestige, ethics, work conditions, admission into the field, training, certification and registration. Unfortunately, teaching in Nigeria is yet to be fully accorded the 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 teachers' registration council to enforce its code of ethics and standard.

Conclusion

Teachers play a vital role in raising awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among their students. They help students understand what the SDGs are, why they are essential, and how they relate to everyday life. Through engaging lessons and discussions, teachers ensure that students recognize the significance of the SDGs in addressing global challenges like poverty, climate change, and equality. This awareness equips students with the knowledge needed to make informed choices and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable world. For example: Organizing awareness campaigns about the SDGs within the school and then those rallies outside the school to spread awareness to the community. Educational institutions serve as platforms for introducing students to the SDGs and explaining their significance. For example: Incorporating SDG-related content into curricula and organizing awareness campaigns within schools (Dhaka, 2024).

The society now expects accountability from the schools for the input they make. The only logical solution appears to be the continuous development of teachers to upgrade their knowledge. The quality of education in any country cannot be kept high without a virile continuous programme of developing teachers through retraining and upgrading the serving teachers. The rate at which new technology and new knowledge get into the world of man makes it imperative to see teacher education as lifelong continuing education system one requires on the job. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN 2009) states that in order to improve quality education at the primary and secondary levels, the government shall regulate in-service programmes for teachers and head teachers. This shows that the Federal Government recognizes the need for continuous development of serving teachers to ensure that their knowledge is up to date with the new technology. Teacher development is a process of guided experiences to change the serving teachers' attitudes, behaviours or opinions. It means investing on the serving teachers to enable them perform better and to empower them to make the best use of their natural abilities. 'This implies that continuous development is to be related to the job of teaching and learning. Planning a development programme for teachers must therefore start with comparing attributes already possessed by the teachers for effective teaching and learning to take place. (Armstrong, 1992).

Recommendations

The paper therefore makes the following recommendations:

1. In view of the invaluable role of teachers in the life of any nation, the government should increase the funding of teacher education sector by devoting a minimum of 30% of its annual budget on the training and professional development of teachers through in-service training, seminars, conferences, workshops on ICT programs and provision of infrastructural facilities.
2. There is need to re-organize the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) as presently constituted to be more proactive in enforcing the code of ethics and standard of the teaching profession.
3. Government should be more committed to the welfare of teachers through regular salaries and allowances, improved conditions of service, regular promotions and recognition of

- teachers in decision making process on matters affecting their profession.
4. There should be adequate provisions of teaching and learning resources in preschool centers.
5. There should be re-integration of our indigenous forms of curriculum which will enhance all round emancipation of our Nigerian youths.

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