Achieving Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education in Nigeria: The Role of Teacher Education

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Abstract
Achieving inclusive and equitable quality education in Nigeria amounts to changing the fortunes of Nigeria and transforming Nigeria from developing nation, to the enviable status of developed nation. Such a feat is always the ultimate goal of all nations, Nigeria inclusive. This paper is written within the confines of this lofty but achievable vision. The introduction echoed the significance of inclusive, equitable and quality education and prescribed them as targets that all nations should endeavor to achieve. In the main paper, the concept and implications of quality education was discussed, the discussion under this sub-heading was summed up with impediments to quality education. Under inclusive education sub-heading, the paper periscope on the meaning, significance and obstacles to inclusive education. The next variable of interest is equitable education, it was analyzed in terms of its meaning, significance and possible obstacle that may challenge attaining equitable education in Nigeria. The paper proceeded further, to consider the sub-title teacher education, it was reviewed from the colonial era to date, but the review was brief. The prime sub-heading of the paper were suggestions on the role teacher education could play in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education in Nigeria. Eight suggestions were advanced; they include training of teacher in the use of cutting edge educational technologies; training of teachers in pedagogies that yield very high learning achievements in students, training of people with disabilities to be teacher, among others.

Keywords: *Inclusive, equitable, quality, teacher education.*

Introduction

Achieving quality education is the dream of every education system globally. No education system dreams of running a substandard, inferior, second-rate, deficient or poor quality education. In a nation where citizens are not given quality education, such a nation may not develop at the anticipated phase, growth may be retarded, transformation may be slow or absent, national educational goals may be largely unachieved and societal aspiration may remain unrealized. The preceding indices are worrisome and unacceptable to all development minded countries. Such countries go to any length to avert encountering any of these nasty and spiteful experiences, by insisting on giving quality education to its citizens.

Paradoxically, an education system may be measured to have met all the criteria for quality education, yet the above unwanted variables may still be manifest in its educational statistics. A scenario such as this may emanate where the education system is not inclusive, or where equitable distribution of educational institutions is abused, among others. Non inclusive education systems can germinate spots of un-educated citizens who may retard

development instead of making positive contributions. Similarly, any education system whose institutions are not equitably distributed or distribution is skewed in favor of States, Local Governments, tribes or community; such a system may not attain its educational goals.

This paper is concern that the question of quality has a serious bearing on any education system, but that other issues such as inclusiveness and equitable education are equally important, therefore, they deserve to be considered. This presentation consent that quality education should be prioritized in all education systems, with Nigeria as its focus. The treatise view as worrisome a situation where the quality of education is rated as poor, it went further to explicate other variables such as inclusiveness and equity in education which if not properly addressed can register un-wanted experiences on the society. Finally, the paper positioned that, teacher education, can play a significant role in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education in Nigeria, eight suggestions were offered on how teacher education can play such a game changing role.

What is Quality Education?

Citizens of a nation do not only have right to education, the education given must be qualitative. What does quality infer in an educational setting? There are various definitions of the term "quality" when it is discussed under education. Terms such as standard, efficiency, effectiveness and quality have often been used interchangeably.

Quality education has to do with the attainment of set standards. These standards are usually derived from societal aspirations to which the education system must conform, (Humphrey & Crawfurd, 2015). Quality education also means attainment of the highest or finest standard of education. (Ogunyinka, , Okeke, Adedoyin, 2015), defined quality education as, that distinguishing parameter that brings out or exposes the worth or goodness associated with educational programs. Education may be classified as qualitative if learners of an education system demonstrate competence during and after living school.

Nigerian government is pre-occupied in charting out mechanism that can ensure good quality education. It is in this vein that quality assurance agencies have been establish for all levels of the education system, such as National University Commission (NUC), Nation Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Commission for Colleges of Eduction (NCCE), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC),and others. Each of this agencies have quality assurance units, that ensure, quality education in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and Basic Education respectively. Quality education is the ultimate desire and attaining quality education is not optional but absolute.

Implications of Quality Education

In contemporary world the level of development of any nation is determine by the quality of education its citizens have received. Countries that have harnessed substantial proportion of their resources and invested them in education are on high pedestals of development. Countries in this category are called developed countries; generally their citizens live above poverty level, with high life expectancy rates, low mortality rates and so on.

Contrastingly, countries that have consistently failed to give their citizens quality education may be battling with poverty, high mortality rates, low life expectancy, low literacy rate etc, Nigeria seem to belong to this group with under 5 year mortality rate as high as 10.9 per 1000, when compare to Canada's 5, and United Kingdom's 4 (UNESCO 2014).

Quality is at the heart of education, it always influence what students learn, how well they learn and what benefits they draw from their education. The quest to ensure that students achieve quality education, with decent learning outcomes, values and skills that may propel them to play a positive role in their societies, is an issue on the policy agenda of nearly every country. As many governments strive for quality education, quality education is not without

challenges or impediments.

Impediment to Quality Education

There is an adage that says "nothing good comes easy", quality education is good, quality education is a master piece, with quality education virtually all aspects of human endeavor, can be achieved. The challenges of quality education, which must be cleared include: The learner must be ready to learn. The learning environment must be conducive enough, so that learning achievements are maximized. All the three learning domains must be properly developed. Teachers must be qualified and effective; they need to be well motivated. Quality assurance agencies or units must be functional and effective. Management of educational institutions must be given to professional teachers with requisite qualifications.

The impediments listed above are not exhaustive; the few mentioned can be further broken down to their discrete components. Resolute and determined education systems do everything within its reach to control the un-wanted effects of all impediments to quality education.

It is expected that where impediments to quality education are properly controlled, other things being equal, quality education becomes a reality and growth in the country is guaranteed. In a nation where quality education is not inclusive and equitably distributed, a large segment of the society may either be not educated at all or poorly educated. Effective and sustainable development requires all citizens to receive quality education and nothing less.

Inclusive Education

There is no one universally accepted definition of inclusive education, as posited by Holversen and Neary (2001). Ayo (2003) defines inclusive education as full-time placement of children with mild, moderate and severe disabilities in regular classrooms. The Florida Development Disability Council (2001), saw inclusive education as providing education to all learners, including disabled, equal opportunities to receive effective educational services, with needed supplementary aides and support services, in age appropriate classroom in their neighborhood schools, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. From the foregoing definitions, inclusive education means bringing the physically challenged and normal student to be educated in the same classroom.

Disability in some Nigerian communities is viewed as a curse, and so, people discriminate against persons with disabilities, (Falai, 2016). The situation described is not the best; it denies Nigerians with disability their right to dignity of the human person, as well as repudiating them the opportunity to showcase their potentials to contribute to the development of Nigeria.

The most common disabilities in Nigeria are visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and intellectual impairment (Lang & Upah, 2016). The total number of Nigerian with disabilities according to Segun (2017) is 25 million. This number is too large to be neglected by the Nigerian education system; to exclude them from education is suicidal.

A generic concept of inclusive education connotes including all sections of the society to participate in the education program irrespective of tribe, local government, state, zone, religion and so on. It is dangerous for Nigeria to discriminate on any issue but is even most dangerous for Nigeria to discriminate or exclude any individual or group on education. Exclusive education lives some parts of the nation un-educated; such excluded groups could be probable insurgents, kidnappers, thugs, robbers, gangsters, hoodlums, criminals, robbers, burglars, thieves and so on.

Inclusion is about creating a better Nigeria for every Nigerian. The U.N. call for inclusive education signifies a new approach to education globally. The Salamanca

frameworks of action states that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitude, creating receptive communities, and building an inclusive society. That inclusive education provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve their efficiency and ultimately it is cost effective (UNESCO 1994). Inclusive education is therefore a useful venture for Nigeria.

From the aforementioned exclusive education is reminiscent with destruction, while inclusive education is suggestive of progress, development and upliftment, It is what all education systems are desirable to establish, achieve and sustain. Regrettably achieving inclusive education is not trouble – free, it is bedeviled with challenges and obstacles that need to be noted, for proper action.

Obstacles towards Achieving Inclusive Education

(1) Obstacles towards achieving inclusive education include the following: (2) Lack of trained inclusive education teachers and personnel.(3) Current situation of public and private school buildings are not inclusive in nature. (4) Lack of inclusive education instructional materials. (5) Negative attitudes on the part of regular teachers. (6) Negative attitudes on the part of normal students.(6) Negative attitude on the part of parents towards inclusive education. (7) Inadequate funding. (8) Poor transportation system to schools.

Equitable Education

The term equitable connotes fairness, impartiality, evenhanded or something characterized by justice. Equitable education therefore means impartiality and fairness in the distribution of access to quality education. Impartiality and fairness should not be observed on the basis of any divide, such as race, tribe, gender, religion, local government, state, zone and so on. Fairness implies that factors specific to one's personal conditions should not interfere with the potentials of educational pursuit. The growing importance of equitable education is based on the premise that an individual's level of education directly correlates to future quality of life. Therefore, an education system that practices equitable education forms a strong foundation of a society that is fair and thriving. On the other hand un-equitable education spells doom for the progress of the nation.

Equitable primary/Basic educations in Nigeria were unachieved until the introduction of Universal Free Primary Education (UPE) in 1975. Hitherto the distribution of primary educations was skewed in favour of urban and semi-urban settlements. With the launching of UPE the number of primary school increase geometrically, with nearly every village in Nigeria having its own primary school. For instance, there were 21,223 primary schools in Nigeria in 1970; it rose to 36,534 in 1976. Secondary Schools and Universities followed a similar pattern. In 1960 there were about four Universities, today there are 39 Federal Universities, and with one each located equitably in each of the 36 states. The remaining three are the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna, the Nigerian Police Academy in Kano and University of Abuja (Segun, 2017).

Equitable education is expected to manifest at the state and local government levels. In Gombe State, where there are three senatorial Districts, equitable education seem not to have been observed, with four state owned tertiary institutions located in Gombe North, none in Gombe central and two in Gombe South. However, the two federal institutions located in Gombe central can minimize feelings of partiality. Unfairness can be controlled by opening University campuses in areas or Local Governments that do not have tertiary institutions, as practiced by the Bauchi State Government.

Obstacles to Equitable Education

No government wants to be an partial umpire in the distribution of assets that supports the development of human capital. These is because a partial government that favors one section of its community whether on the basis of tribe, religion or state is only incubating forces that will rain havoc and mayhem, all over the country, without borders. As much as governments are desirous to have equitable education they may be constrains by the following obstacles: Inadequate finances, Politicization of equitable education, Terrain and location of some communities and Negative attitudes to rural schools by teachers.

Teacher Education

Teacher education refers to the process where pre-service or in-service teachers acquire knowledge, attitudes and skills that can enable them to be effective teachers in real life situation. They exhibit their teaching skills in classrooms, and the wider community. Ideally teacher education is conceived as a seamless continuum, but in reality teacher education is often divided into three stages: Initial teacher training (pre-service course before entering the classroom). Induction (the process of mentorship). Teacher Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Program (MCPD).

Generally teacher education curriculum can be broken into five areas: Foundational knowledge (philosophy of education, sociology of education, educational psychology history of education and curriculum and educational technology). Pedagogy (methods, techniques, approaches and strategies). Subject matters (knowledge of teaching subjects). Evaluation (how to assess learner's performances/self assessment). Practical teaching (teaching practices)

In Nigeria the following institutions give teacher education. Colleges of Education, Faculties of Education; Institutes of Education; National Teachers Institute (NTI); Schools of Education in Polytechnics; National Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN); National Mathematical Centre (NMC) (Federal Republic of Nigeria 2014).

Teacher education occupies and plays a very significant role in the development of any nation (Federal Ministry of Education, 2009). Teacher education in Nigeria is as old as western education and can be traced backs to 1859 when the first Teacher Training College (TTC) was established in Abeokuta 1859, by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Since then Nigeria has experience mass increase in Teacher Education Institutions as indicated in

Table 1. Number of Universities and Colleges of Education in Nigeria

S/NO	Institutions	Ownership			
		Federal	State	Private	Total
1.	Colleges of Education	21	46	47	114
2.	Universities	40	39	50	129

Source: Statistical Digest of Teachers in Nigeria

These institutions produce various categories of teachers for various levels of the education system. It is expected that these teachers are equipped to give quality education, be effective as inclusive education teachers and be ready to serve in any area they are posted, noting that equitable distribution of education may require teachers to serve sometimes in remote areas.

Suggestions: The Role of Teacher Education in Achieving Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education.

Teacher education is the major instrument for achieving quality education in any nation, it is the hub or epi-centre of education, and whatever happens here, will be replicated in the entire education system. As earlier mentioned, no nation wants to compromise on issues of quality, unfortunately quality could be comprise where inclusive and equitable education is neglected. To forestall such an unwanted development teacher education can play the following roles:

1. **Teacher Education must include Training in Cutting Edge Educational Technology.**

When James Pillans invented the blackboard, which was nicknamed, the simple genius, in 1800. His contemporary society described it as the biggest revolution in the evolution of Educational Technology (Lewis, 2014). But it turned out to be only the harbinger or forerunner of cutting edge teaching technologies that we have today, they could be audio, visual, audio-visual or multisensory aids. To achieve quality and inclusive education teacher education institutions must train student-teachers in the use of both old and current teaching machines. Nigeria seems to be lagging behind in the use of sophisticated teaching machines, especially at the lower levels of the education system. Nigeria must not continue to condone such a state of affairs.

2. **Teacher Education Institutions Must Train Student-teachers in Pedagogies that Yield Very High Learning Achievements.**

The learning pyramid breaks down different modes of learning into various categories and argues that categories that engage students in activities are better for long-term learning. That learners remember 10% of what they read; 20% of what they hear; 30% of what they see, and so on all the way to 90% of what they do (Edgar, 1969). The outcome of this research is a challenge to teacher education institutions to redouble their efforts in training teachers in the use of learner-centred pedagogies. Learner-centred are methods trigger larger percentage of students to attain maximum learning capacity. Learner-centred pedagogies are very good for inclusive classrooms.

3. **Teacher Education Institutions Should Train In-service Teachers to Appreciate the Diversity of an Inclusive Classroom.**

To be effective an inclusive teacher preparation program must instill in the pre-service teacher an understanding and appreciation of diversity learners. Most teachers in Nigeria have not had a great deal of experience in teaching students with diverse needs and abilities. This is because during their school days they were not trained in inclusive classrooms, thus they have little experience with children with disabilities. They should be properly oriented on how to accommodate, accept and tolerate unfolding events in an inclusive classroom.

4. **People with Disabilities Should be Involved in Teacher Education**

There is a growing movement towards community involvement in school management and development (Lewis, 2013). For schools to be successful in such ventures all diverse subgroups in the school must be represented. Unfortunately most people involved in planning and running teacher education institutions seem not to include people with disabilities.

5. **Restructure Faculties of Education to Achieve Quality Teacher Education.**

Universities are highly complex settings and their complex nature has implications for the

respective Faculties, especially Faculties of Education, where students receive lectures in their teaching subjects outside the faculty. Setting such as this influence academic issues, notably teaching practice, a very critical component of teacher education. Often student do not satisfy the number of weeks specified for Teaching Practice for fear of missing lectures in their teaching subject areas, this not the best for quality education. Secondly, if allegations of inferior treatment given to education students in other faculties are true, then it is a serious issue that invites concern, because students who are not properly motivated may not attain the expected standard. Thirdly, if there are delayed submissions of education students results, from other faculties to faculty of Education, this can impede processes in the Faculty of Education and may form the basis where the entire universities wrongly discriminate against faculty of Education.

From all the above submissions and many others, Faculties of Education should be restructured from Faculties into Colleges, where all courses are domicile within their domain; this can greatly help to achieve quality education. Use of combinations faculty and collegiate system have been in operation in Nigeria. There are Medical Colleges for MBBS programs, education has similar peculiarities as medicine, should education be given similar treatment it certainly improve the quality of teacher education, in terms of inclusiveness and equitable education.

6.   Establish Universities of Education

Universities of Agriculture, Universities of Technology, Universities of Petroleum, Defense Academy and Police Academy are all established because authorities concern do not want to compromise of quality on those special areas of human endeavor. Similarly, Nigeria will go a long way in achieving inclusive and equitable quality education if Universities of Education are established and equitably distributed all over Nigeria, at least one in every Geographical Zone. Selected Collages of Education, one in each zone may be upgraded to Universities of Education. Colleges of Education, such as, College of Education Technical Gombe have all it takes to meet specifications of University requirement.

7. Teacher Education Institutions should Produce Adequate Teachers

Educational institutions may be equitably distributed but may not be functional where there are no teachers. Teacher Education Institutions should therefore produce adequate number of teacher who are oriented to teach anywhere in the country, so that every Nigerian child will have access to quality education in inclusive setting.

Conclusion

The position of this paper is that quality education should not be comprised and that such quality education should be equitably distributed, so that no section of the country is left out, and that education should be in inclusive settings. The paper observed that there are impediments to quality education, inclusive education and equitable education. Therefore the paper prospered eight solutions that can teacher education play a significant role to overcome these impediments towards achieving inclusive and equitable quality education.

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